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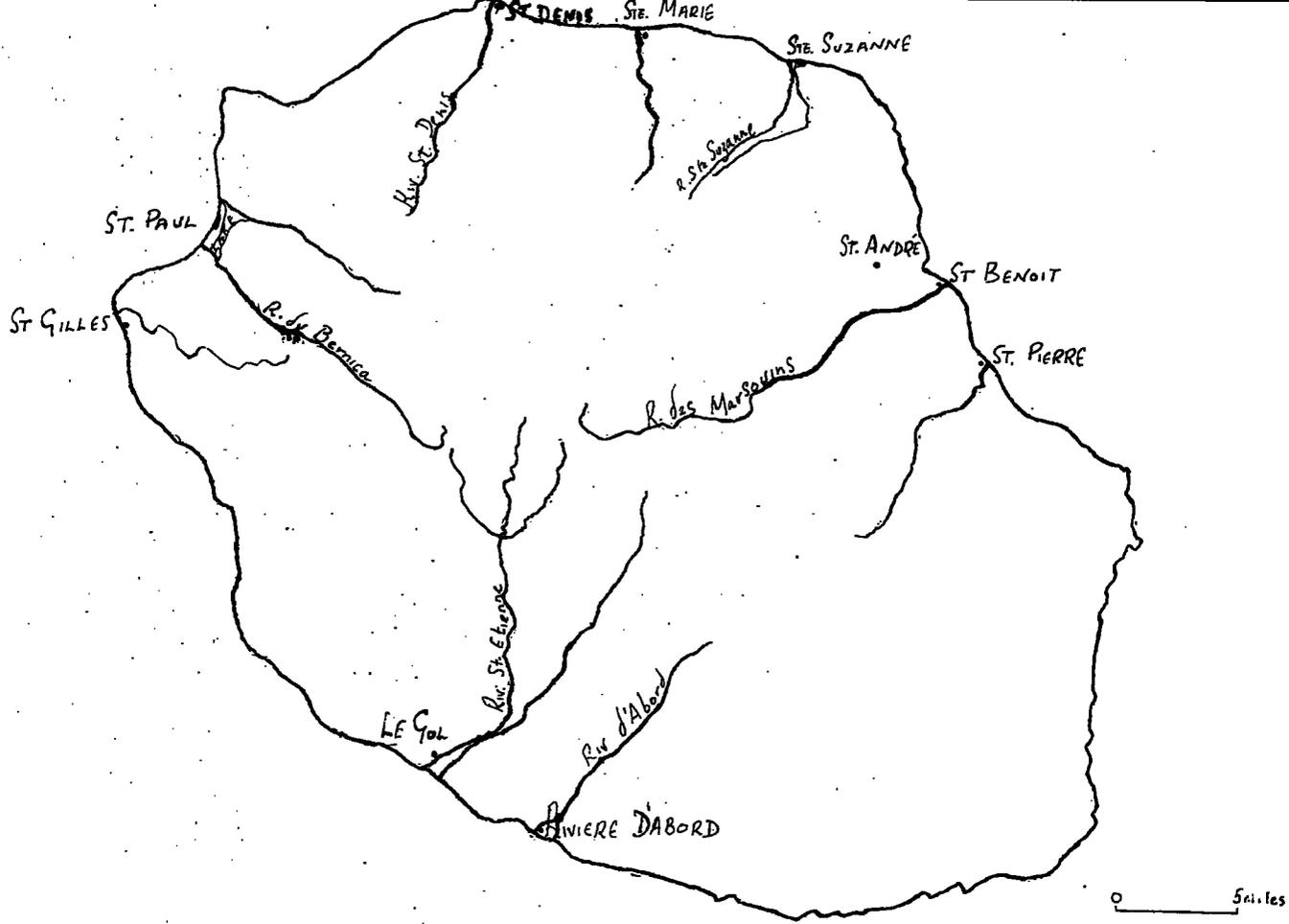
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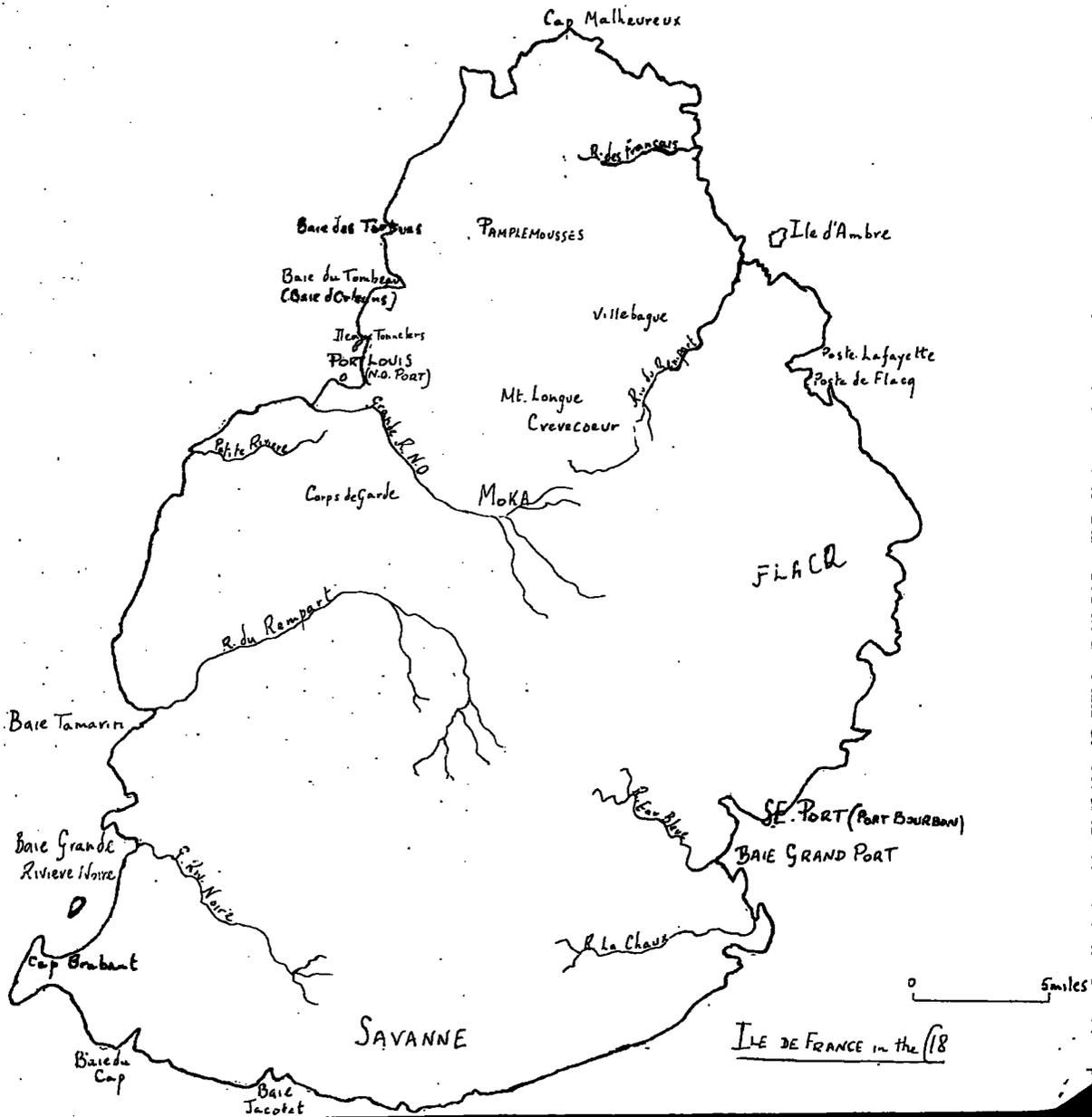
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Bourbon in the 18.



ILE DE FRANCE in the 18

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2. Manuscript Sources.

The Mauritius Archives contains several collections of documents covering the period, 1730-1747, but apart from three volumes of Miscellaneous Documents, OA 96, 97 & 98, these are of a highly specialised nature, i.e. notarial records, series NAI-NA8, and surveys and land concessions, series MA, LH, & LC. These specialised collections have not yet been explored and although they should provide information about the distribution of land concessions, the permanence of the holdings and the formation of private companies by La Bourdonnais, I have not attempted to explore them. The three volumes of Miscellaneous Documents have provided very little material for this work. They do not contain any important correspondence with the Company and their interest is largely of an antiquarian nature; they are curious rather than revealing. Volume OA 96 (c. 1722-1731) gives some indication of the shortage of food during the period. Volume OA 97 (c. 1731-1735) contains 31 documents relating to the visit of Cossigny and his quarrels with the administrators, culminating in his expulsion from the Isles (orders of 9 December and 5 March, 1735) together with several documents concerning the reannexation of estates in Pamplemousses, Moka, Rivière Françoise and Flacq to the demesne of the Company (domaine du roi). Volume OA 98 (c. 1735-1755) contains little of importance on the administration of La Bourdonnais. There is a collection of 9 documents relating to a libel case (La Bourdonnais v. Trédillac - captain of the Prince de Conti); 2 documents relating to the engagement of nail makers and papers concerning the winding up of La Bourdonnais' affairs. (1748 - 1755). The Mauritius Archives also contains a box, Y2/23, with many photostat copies of documents from collections in France relating to La Bourdonnais. When these have been used a footnote in the text will refer to the particular document. The Archives in Réunion could not be visited but it would appear that most of the material relating to Réunion and Mauritius during the period 1730-1747 has already been published. (See Section 3. Printed Sources. & Loughnon. Correspondance du Conseil Supérieur... and Recueil Trimestriel etc.)

3. Printed Sources.

a) Works by La Bourdonnais.

Mahé de La Bourdonnais. Mémoire des Îles de France et de Bourbon. (1740)
Ed. by A. Loughnon and A. Toussaint. Paris 1937. 204 p. This report on his administration in Île de France and Bourbon was written by La Bourdonnais on his return voyage to France in 1740 for his protectors Orry, the Controllers-General of Finances, and Orry de Fulvy, the Inspector-General of the French East India Company. The manuscript was first published by Pierre Margry in 1862; in 1867 it was included in a collection of Mss. made by the same editor: 'Relations et mémoires inédits pour servir à l'histoire de la France dans les pays outre-mer.' For some reason he excluded Part III of the report, together with the author's notes. In 1936 a Mss copy in the Prosper d'Épinay collection (Carnegie Library, Curepipe) was transcribed and edited by A. Loughnon and A. Toussaint. It is divided into three sections: (a) a description of the administration of the Isles 1735-1740; (b) the state

of the colonies in 1740; (c) plans for future development.

Mahé de La Bourdonnais. Mémoire pour le Sieur de La Bourdonnais avec les pièces justificatives. Paris. 1750.

Mahé de La Bourdonnais. Supplément au Mémoire du sieur de La Bourdonnais. Paris. 1751.

These memoirs were written when La Bourdonnais was a prisoner in the Bastille, in collaboration with his lawyer, Pierre de Venes. They were arranged much later by his grandson, Louis Charles de La Bourdonnais, and published in 1827 under the somewhat misleading title: Mémoires Historiques de... La Bourdonnais. A second edition appeared in 1890. The Memoire of 1750, which contains nearly 800 pages, is largely a description and a justification of La Bourdonnais' conduct in Madras. Part I contains three sections: a brief biography and a description of events up to May, 1746; an account of the preparations and execution of the plan to capture Madras; an outline of events in India from October, 1746 to May, 1750. Part II is an explanation and justification of La Bourdonnais' policy in Madras and it is divided into four sections: a discussion as to whether La Bourdonnais had the requisite powers to negotiate a treaty of capitulation; an examination of the question as to whether he had the right to negotiate a treaty of ransom; an analysis of the charges made against him, under three headings, faults of ignorance, faults of negligence and criminal (treasonable) conduct; finally, an analysis of the evidence as to whether he accepted bribes. Part III contains letters and documents, 1734 to 1746. There are, in addition, five appendices (Suite des Pièces Justificatives) which include further letters, documents and commentaries.

b) Collections of correspondance and Miscellaneous documents.

Albert Lougnon, ed. Correspondance du Conseil Superieur de Bourbon et de la Compagnie des Indes. Réunion. 1934 - 1941. 5 Vols.

Vol 1. Correspondance. 22 January, 1724 - 30 December, 1731.

Vol 2. Correspondance. 10 March, 1732 - 23 January, 1736.

Vol 3. Correspondance. 23 January, 1736 - 9 May, 1741.

Vol 4. Correspondance and Extracts from the General Register of the French East India Company. 9 November, 1740 - 20 April, 1746.

Vol 5. Correspondance. 17 April, 1746 - 17 October, 1750.

This collection which, in addition, contains correspondance between the Company and the Council of Ile de France and excerpts from the General Register of the Company, has proved to be a major source of information concerning Ile de France and Bourbon. The material was gathered in the Archives of Réunion and the Archives Nationales and Archives de la Ministère de la Marine in France.

Albert Lougnon, ed. Recueil Trimestriel de Documents et Travaux inédits pour servir à l'histoire des Mascareignes françaises. Réunion. 1932-1952. (A three-monthly publication, bound in volumes, each covering a period of about three years).

In this collection there is a considerable number of documents and articles covering the period 1730 - 1750. The most important collection in the recueil Trimestriel is the Correspondance des Administrateurs de Bourbon et ceux de l'Ile de France (1727-1735) which appeared in the 1944 and 1945 issues of the magazine. (Vol VII) Other important articles and documents are: Ile de France in 1755 by A Dalrymple, from British Museum Add. Mss. 33765. Vol I; Esquisse partielle d'une histoire économique de l'ile de Bourbon pendant la régie de... La Bourdonnais by A. Lougnon. Vol V; les dernières années... de La Bourdonnais by G. Baschet. Vol VI; État générale de la dépense à l'Ile de Bourbon en 1737 and Lettre de La Bourdonnais au Conseil... 13 août, 1742,

Vol I: L'organisation religieuse des Iles de France et de Bourbon aux temps de...La Bourdonnais.Vol II.

A.Lougnon.ed.Recueil de documents et travaux inédits pour servir à l'histoire de la Réunion.No.I 1954.

A.Lougnon.Voyages anciens à l'Ile Bourbon(1611-1725).Tananarive.1939. This contains a number of accounts of Bourbon and Ile de France by travellers in the eighteenth century.

c) Other printed sources.

Ananda Ranga Pillai, the private diary of- 1736 -1761.Translated and edited by Sir J.F.Price and K.Rangachari.Madras.1904 - 1922.8 Vols.

Barnwell.P.J.Visits and despatches.1598 - 1948.Mauritius 1948.

Bonneyfoy.F.Arrêts administratifs et règlements du Conseil Provincial et du Conseil Supérieur de l'Ile de France.Lille.1859.

Francheville.J.D.Histoire de la Compagnie des Indes.Paris.1738.

Grant,Charles.History of Mauritius or the Isles of France,composed principally from papers and memoirs of Baron Grant who resided twenty years in the island.London.1801.

This curious book is not by any means a history of Mauritius.It contains an edited translation of much of Part 1 of the 'Mémoire pour le Sieur de La Bourdonnais' and papers on all manner of subjects.Much of the book is quite worthless but there are translations of some letters and papers of Louis Charles le Grand who arrived in Ile de France in 1740 and who returned home in 1758 when he was taken prisoner by the English.His son,Charles,settled in England and published his father's letters and papers.It is interesting to note that Pitt was a subscriber.

L'Homme,L.ed.Mahe de La Bourdonnais.Documents réunis pour la comité du bi-centenaire de La Bourdonnais.Mauritius.1899.

La Garde-Jazier,M.de. Relation de l'expédition de Boka en l'année 1737.Paris.1739.

Lenniel de la Parelle,S.de.Mémoires du Chevalier de la Parelle sur la Prise de Mahé.1725.Paris.1887.

Rostaing,M.de.Relation du voyage fait aux Indes sur l'escadre française sous les ordres de...La Bourdonnais du 1 février au 24 mars,1746.Paris 1758. (Published in Revue Maritime et Coloniale.Vol 67.Paris 1880)

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ABBREVIATIONS.

Full titles of books cited in the footnotes will be found in the bibliography.

- Lougnon. Correspondance : Correspondance du Conseil Supérieur de Bourbon et de la Compagnie des Indes. (1724-1750)
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INTRODUCTION.

During the sixteenth century it was the Portuguese who controlled the trade of the East, but their monopoly was not destined to last, for very soon Portugal found herself unable to maintain the empire that she had built up. Her population did not exceed one and a quarter million people and the yearly expeditions to the East severely strained the limited resources of manpower. Moreover the new wealth weakened administrative honesty. In 1568 a boy of fourteen, Sebastiao, came to the throne and attempted to equal the crusading exploits of the early kings of Portugal. An expedition landed in north Africa in 1578 and in a battle with the Moors 8,000 of his soldiers were killed and 15,000 taken prisoner and sold as slaves. Two years later a Spanish army entered Portugal and Philip II was proclaimed King of the Iberian Peninsula.

The union of the two countries further weakened Portugal and, moreover, the enemies of Spain prepared to attack Portuguese military and trading posts in Africa and Asia. The defeat of the Armada administered the death blow to the Portuguese empire for the fleet which sailed from Lisbon consisted largely of Portuguese ships and less than half returned. Portugal's monopoly in the East Indies and Brazil began to crumble in the face of English and Dutch expansion. In 1591 James Lancaster sailed to the East and in 1594 captured Pernambuco in Brazil. A group of Dutch merchants sent four ships to the East and in 1598 a second fleet of eight ships sailed from Holland.

Considerable capital was required to trade with the East and over the next few years various English, Dutch and French trading companies were founded. In 1600 a 'Company of the Merchants of London Trading to the East Indies' was granted a charter and in 1602 and 1603 four ships were sent to the East. The Dutch were not slow to follow suit and when a Dutch East India Company was founded in 1602 as many as twenty six ships sailed for the East. The Dutch quickly realised that effective trade depended on territorial control and by 1623 they had the monopoly of the spice trade of the East Indies. The English Company turned its attention to India and in 1612 Captain Best landed at Surat. A Portuguese fleet which appeared at the mouth of the river Taptee was defeated and in January of the next year a firman was granted by the Moghul and a factory was established. Company agents were sent to Agra and Ahmadabad and in later years factories were opened in Calicut and Bombay; in 1622 a factory was built at Masulipatam; in 1639 Madras was purchased and in the following year a factory was established at Mooghly in the province of Bengal.

French commercial enterprise in the East was hampered by internal weakness, but during the reign of Henry IV a French Company trading to the Indies was established. Another company was launched in 1611 but neither appears to have fitted out any ships. In 1615, however, a group of Rouen merchants persuaded the government to transfer the privileges of the original company to a new company, which sent two fleets to the East, one in 1616, the other in 1619, but the results were unsatisfactory and the company was unable to attract further capital to fit out another fleet. Richelieu formed a new company in 1642 with the object of colonising Madagascar. (1) The Dutch had already established a trading post in the north of the island but the settlement had been wiped out. The French settlers landed at a point in the extreme South-East of the island and the post appears to have been called St. Laurent. When the colonists

(1) Madagascar was first sighted by a Portuguese ship on 10 August, 1500, the day of St. Laurence. The island was known at this time as St. Laurent.

attempted to develop the settlement they found that the local Malagasy tribes were not interested in trading and although the post was fortified it was not developed, as its maintenance depended solely on strong support from the Company. The directors intended to use the post as a base for trade in India but the capital of the Company was soon exhausted in defending the settlers and in supplying them with food and equipment. Within a few years the Company was bankrupt..

Colbert organised a new East India Company in 1664 which was given extensive privileges. Its monopoly of trade in the Indian and Pacific Ocean was to be of fifty years duration and the government announced that it would subsidize the Company until 1674 and advance one fifth of the capital. The directors of the Company decided to make a further attempt to colonise Madagascar and in 1664 a large expedition sailed from Brest. St. Laurent was renamed Fort Dauphin. In 1666 another expedition was fitted out under the command of François Caron, but when the ships arrived at Fort Dauphin in 1667, Caron realised that the colony could not be developed further and he decided to sail for India, where he successfully established a factory at Surat. (1668). His associate, a Persian named Marwara, set up a factory at Masulipatam in 1669.

The directors of the Company were highly satisfied and they authorised Caron to attempt to establish a factory in Ceylon. Admiral Lahaye captured Trincomalee in 1672 but when, shortly afterwards, the Dutch forced the French to evacuate the post, the French fleet sailed for the Coromandel Coast and a successful attack was made on the Portuguese settlement at St. Thomé. Two years later, however, the ubiquitous Dutch captured the town. The majority of the soldiers in the French garrison decided to return to Surat, but a group of sixty men, led by François Martin, marched to a post in the Carnatic which their commander had purchased in the same year, and which later became known as Pondicherry. Martin arrived in April, 1674, and the post was found to be tolerably healthy. He succeeded in establishing friendly relations with the local rulers; he created a defence corps of 300 Indians and some years later was granted permission to collect taxes in the region. A brisk trade in piece goods developed. The factory at Masulipatam grew more slowly and for some years was of little importance, but it shared in the early prosperity of Pondicherry and in 1693 the French were able to carry out a more ambitious building programme.

The directors of the French East India Company tended to lose interest in Madagascar when the trading posts in India began to prosper but they realised that a base in the Indian Ocean was essential, not only to safeguard the sea route to India, but also for the refitting of ships sailing to and from France. The administrators at Fort Dauphin had already directed their attention to an uninhabited island in the Indian Ocean called Mascarenhas. In 1643 Jacques Promis, the representative of the Company in Madagascar, decided to annex the island and six years later Etienne de Flacourt, the Governor of Fort Dauphin, sent a ship, the St. Laurent, to take formal possession. The island was renamed Bourbon. In 1658 a small group of Malagasy colonists, led by two Frenchmen, landed in Bourbon but shortly afterwards, their slaves having escaped to the forests, they decided to leave the island, which for some years remained virtually uninhabited. Another attempt was made to colonise the island in 1665 and a small settlement was built. The destruction of the trading post at Fort Dauphin in 1674 led to a further increase in population which by 1686 had reached 269 people. The population grew steadily during the first quarter of the eighteenth century and by 1732 there were 2,000 colonists and 5,000 slaves. The settlers were a very mixed group: retired soldiers, amnestied pirates, retired Company officials, peasants deported from France, men who had been expelled from factories in India,

younger sons of prosperous families, hoping to make a fortune, and middle class speculators who had been ruined in the collapse of Law's Bank. In addition, there were temporary Company officials, two regiments of soldiers and a small number of European workmen. (1)

Progress in the new colony was slow. The Company at this time suffered a number of reverses in India. Surat was abandoned, owing to the decline in trade and in 1693 Pondicherry was blockaded by the Dutch. The Governor was forced to surrender but four years later the factory was restored to the French and the directors of the Company decided to make it their new headquarters in India. Meanwhile, in France, the Company failed to attract new capital; in 1701 the furniture in the directors' room was seized by creditors and again in 1712 the Company was unable to meet a debt of 6,000 livres. The shipyards at Lorient were idle and licenses were issued to private shipowners or companies, authorizing them to trade with India. (2)

In 1714 one of these companies, the Société Maritime de St. Malo, was ordered by Pontchartrain, the Minister of the Marine, to take possession of the uninhabited island of Mauritius, which was one days sail from Bourbon. This island had been a Portuguese possession in the sixteenth century, although it was never colonised, and in 1598 the Dutch claimed it in the name of the Statholder, Maurice of Nassau. For 40 years they used the island as a port of call for revictualling and repairing their ships and, like the Portuguese, they added to its resources by introducing livestock and vegetables. During this period the island was visited by French and English captains looking for ebony, but in May, 1638, the Dutch East India Company sent two small parties of colonists to take formal possession. A fort was built and the new Governor was ordered to protect the ebony resources of the island and to grow food for Company ships. The population probably never exceeded 300 and after 1652, when the Dutch colonised the Cape of Good Hope, it was decided to abandon Mauritius. In 1658 the settlement was destroyed and the Dutch left the island.

Six years later the Dutch Company sent another expedition to Mauritius to exploit the timber resources and to grow food for the revictualling of ships. The population remained very small, though the Company brought in slaves from Madagascar and convicts from Batavia. The Malagasy slaves were difficult to control and many of them escaped to the forests which covered most of the island. It seems likely that the labour problem was the decisive factor which caused the Dutch to abandon the island in 1710; other factors were cyclones, the falling price of ebony, and the depredations of rats, monkeys and locusts. A French visitor to the island in 1708 wrote: "Il n'y a que 14 habitants et une mauvaise fort... Il y a 40 soldats et tous les ans on y envoya un vaisseau... ils sont tormentés par des singes qui arrachent tout ce que l'on y sème et qui mangent les fruits." (3) In 1710 the settlement at Grand Port was again destroyed and the plantations laid waste.

From 1715 to 1721 several groups of colonists from Bourbon appear to have visited the island, but it was not until 1721 that a permanent settlement was built. The French East India Company, which had been absorbed into Law's Perpetual Company in 1719, did not actively promote the colonisation of the island until 1721, when the King ceded the island to the Company. A governor, de Nyon, was appointed and in 1722 he arrived in Ile de France, accompanied by a number of builders, clerks and workmen, and two regiments of Swiss mercenaries, though a large proportion of these died during the voyage. Some of the men had brought with them their wives and families, but the total population in this year still did not

(1) Guet. Bourbon. p. 141, 221; Loughon. Correspondance. Vol II. Introduction. p. XVII.

(2) Rogerie. Les Bretons aux Iles. p. 97-99.

(3) Recueil Trimestriel. Vol VI. Rapport de G. Hébert en 1708. p. 67.

exceed 200, including 30 slaves. The new colonists settled in two areas, in the N.W. Port, often called La Camp, and in the S.E. Port, or Port Bourbon. There was no line of communication between the two settlements, except by boat. The directors had originally intended to grow coffee, but when Bourbon coffee was found to be of mediocre quality it was decided to encourage the colonists in Ile de France to grow food instead. But progress was slow and in 1726 there were still very few planters in the island, the majority of the inhabitants being Company personnel, their families, and the soldiers in the garrison.

For some years the directors had been looking for a suitable port in the Indian Ocean to serve as a refitting and revictualling station for Company ships on their way to India and the Far East. After a voyage of three or four months, supplies were running low and ships usually called at Bourbon and Ile de France to take on water, wood and any provisions available, but since food was scarce in the Isles it was not always possible to meet these demands. In addition to the problem of revictualling was the question of finding a safe anchorage for ships returning from India on the N.E. Monsoon. Arriving in the Isles at the height of the cyclone season from December to March, ships anchored off St. Denis, in Bourbon, were often obliged during a storm to make for the open sea, and since many of them were already badly damaged by the Monsoon, this was a difficult and hazardous operation. Moreover, it was imperative to refit these ships as soon as they arrived, as it was extremely dangerous to round the Cape after the month of April.

Ile de France on the other hand had two good, natural harbours and in 1727 the Company decided to increase its efforts to develop it as a potential refitting and revictualling base. The population was still very scant and during the next few years a number of families were brought out from France and retired soldiers from Pondicherry were encouraged to settle with their families. At first it was decided to develop the S.E. Port, but in 1731 the Company ordered all ships to anchor in the N.W. Port. In the same year the directors appointed a skilled engineer, Charpentier de Cossigny, to make a survey of ports in the Indian Ocean. After visiting Ile de France, Bourbon and Madagascar, Cossigny recommended the N.W. Port in Ile de France as the most suitable harbour in the Indian Ocean and in 1734 he was given instructions to commence harbour installations. The Provincial Council was ordered to collect materials and provide workmen, but when the Governor, de Maupin, was finally obliged to employ soldiers from the garrison for this work, the troops mutinied and forced him to come to terms. As a result of this the work virtually came to a standstill.

Meanwhile it was hoped that the colonists would not only become self-supporting, but would produce enough food to meet the constant demands from passing ships. When the island was first colonised, land was plentiful and grants were made to any colonist willing to clear it and grow food. The Council issued seed, timber, slaves and tools and during the first year newly arrived colonists were given an allowance of food from the Company stores until their land was producing. "L' intention de la Compagnie," wrote the directors, "est que vous fassiez distribuer la ration par teste, au moins pendant un an et jusqu'à ce que les terres... leur puissent fournir leur subsistance: vous leur avancerez des graines et semences, vous leur ferez aussi donner des nègres dans la quantité proportionnée aux terrains que vous leur aurez concédé avec les outils et instruments dont ils auront besoin pour travailler la terre, le tout à remettre par eux dans les magasins: pour les vivres et graines, en nature et les nègres, outils et instruments à payer suivant les prix réglés." (1) The directors were optimistic

(1) Loughon. Correspondance. Vol I. The Company to the Provincial Council of Ile de France. 11 December, 1727. p. 59.

regarding the future of the island; the administrators had informed them that the interior was very fertile and they expected that the colonists would be able to pay back Company loans within three years. Land rents were paid in tithe (la dixième) until 1729 when the directors announced that colonists were to pay into the Company warehouse 20lbs. of rice or wheat, or 4oz. of coffee, for each arpent (1.043 acres) of land. But in these early years the island did not prosper. Life in the colony was hard and uncertain, food, tools and slaves were scarce and the allocation of these essential commodities led to friction and unpleasantness among the colonists. Moreover, attacks by bands of maroons were a frequent occurrence and there was constant fear of a slave revolt. Cyclones destroyed houses and crops, reducing the island to starvation, and those food crops which managed to survive the cyclones and the depredations of rats and other vermin deteriorated rapidly when stored. These hardships were reflected in the morale of public life as well as of the private individual and there were constant quarrels between the civil and military authorities.

This introduction would not be complete without some reference to the organisation and outlook of the French East India Company in the eighteenth century and the prevailing attitude of the directors towards Bourbon and Ile de France. There were, after 1664, several French East India Companies, each one inheriting the rights and responsibilities laid down in the Charter of 1664. The Company had a monopoly of trade in the East, the right to fortify factories, to build up a fleet, to make treaties and to conquer new territories in the name of the king. After the collapse of Law's scheme, an attempt to create a huge trading corporation which would absorb the national debt into its own stock, a number of commissioners were chosen to straighten out the finances of the Company and in 1725 the East India Company was re-established on traditional lines. It had a trading monopoly in the Indian Ocean, including the Red Sea and the East Coast of Africa, and in China, and it was, at the same time, given control of the slave trade of West Africa. The port of Lorient in Brittany became one of the busiest ports in Europe. The French mercantile marine increased rapidly; in 1715 France possessed some 300 ships and by 1735 this number had reached 1,800, sixty of which belonged to the East India Company.

In 1725 the government decided to play an active part in the organisation of the East India Company; the king was to elect the members of the Company Council from the Royal Council, the Royal Navy and from among the leading merchants of France. The shareholders protested and finally an agreement was reached whereby the government nominated 12 directors and 4 inspectors. The annual meeting of shareholders was to elect 8 officials (syndics), whose main function was mainly of an executive nature, but since for the next twenty years there was, in fact, no meeting of shareholders, the government was able to control the activities of the Council. From 1725 to 1745 it was Philibert Orry, the Controller-General of Finances who directed the policy of the Company and all important despatches were signed by him. In 1730 he reorganised the administrative structure of the Company; there were to be six directors and two syndics, one of whom was stationed at Lorient, the other at Nantes; the inspectorate was abolished but shortly afterwards it was recreated and from 1733 to 1745 the post of Inspector-General was held by Orry's brother, Orry de Fulvy, who in these years proved to be the most influential member of the Council. La Bourdonnais enjoyed the confidence and protection of both of these men. (1)

(1) Cultru. *Muplex*. p. 3-4.

since the activities of the Company were largely controlled by the government, the directors had no real power in determining policy and this lack of responsibility fostered incompetence and indifference. Many of them were engaged in private trading ventures, illicit or otherwise, and service on the Council was generally regarded as a means of promotion to an intendency or even to a ministry. "Les directeurs," writes Cultru, "travaillaient peu, que, sauf quelques uns, ils ne présentaient aucune garanti de compétence, qu'ils n'avaient pas de responsabilité effective à cause du controle permanent du Commissaire du Roi, qu'ils n'avaient intérêt personnel à la prosperite de la Compagnie, qu'ils en avaient un très grand à plaire au Commissaire, au Ministre et aux gens bien en cour." (1)

The financial basis of the Company was very unsound. From 1723 to 1745 the Company declared a 10% dividend, paid from funds received from the administration of the tobacco monopoly in France. General expenses, however, could only be met by recourse to large-scale borrowing, since the Company did not possess adequate liquid assets, and profits were needed to repay the high rates of interest and the short-term loans. "Elle se soutenait au de fonds," writes Cultru, "qui ne provenaient pas d'eux et elle leur distribuait un revenu qui ne provenait pas de son commerce." (2) During the War of the Austrian Succession the Company's losses were very serious and after 1741 shareholders began to sell out in bulk. From 1746 to 1763 the Company did not show any profit.

Until 1742 trade in Bourbon and Ile de France was a Company monopoly. Each year the Company sent out food, wines and spirits, manufactured goods, and slaves from West Africa. In addition they exported coin and bills of exchange to enable the administrators to pay colonists for produce brought to the company warehouses and to cover the cost of governance and defence. Bourbon, which was producing over half a million pounds of coffee each year by 1732, could, in theory, pay for her imports by the sale of coffee to the Company, but Ile de France, which was intended primarily as a refitting and revictualling station, did not have an important cash crop. The island could only pay for its imports from Europe and India by means of 'invisible exports,' such as harbour and shipbuilding facilities, and by the production of food for Company ships.

By 1734 the directors appear to have been dissatisfied with the state of affairs in the two islands. The production of coffee in Bourbon was increasing rapidly but the quality had not improved. Food production was declining as more colonists turned to coffee-growing and the island was forced to import rice, flour, salt goods and livestock. The company had invested large sums of money in Ile de France in order to develop harbour facilities, but building operations were constantly held up owing to the shortage of labour and materials. The debts of the colonists in both islands were considerable and the Company was experiencing great difficulty in recovering even a proportion of them. The directors restricted imports in order to encourage the colonists to pay their debts but the only result was to force them to purchase supplies from passing ships. Public order in Bourbon and Ile de France was threatened by the presence of gangs of maroons and the methods used to deal with the problem were ineffectual. Finally, relations between the two islands were not good, and for many years the two administrations failed to work in harmony.

(1) Cultru. Dupleix. p. 18-19.

(2) Ibid. p. 7.

I. La Bourdonnais : Early Years.

Bertrand François Mahé de La Bourdonnais was born in St. Malo on 11 February, 1699. The family was engaged in commerce; his grandfather was a small merchant who in his later years held the unimportant post of procureur du roi in Dinan and his father was a sailor and trader. In 1704 his father was in command of a ship which was fitted out to trade with St. Domingo. He had a small share in the cargo. On the return voyage the vessel was captured by an English warship and he was taken prisoner. He died in captivity at Plymouth in 1705. (1) Little is known of the early years of La Bourdonnais. In the Memoire which was written in the Bastille La Bourdonnais gives a brief resumé of his early voyages. At the age of ten he was a cadet aboard a ship which made a voyage to the west coast of South America and to the South Pacific. In 1713 he held the rank of ensign aboard a ship which visited the Philippines and the East Indies. Four years later he sailed in northern seas; the ship probably visited Iceland and the coast of Greenland; at this time a group of French merchants was engaged in exploring trade routes in the north. In 1718 he held a junior command in a ship trading with the Levant. (2)

In 1719 La Bourdonnais joined the fleet of the East India Company as a second lieutenant. At this time officers in the service of the Company were regarded as the élite of the French mercantile marine and the directors were able to recruit first class seamen. The officers and ships' crews had the right to engage in private trading and rates of pay and allowances were high. La Bourdonnais was promoted to lieutenant in 1723 and he sailed for the East Indies. He was apparently a highly competent navigator and during the voyage he wrote a treatise on masts and sails (*Traité sur la Mâturation des Vaisseaux*.) He showed his resourcefulness by rescuing a ship which was stranded off Bourbon. He took the ship's long boat to Ile de France and returned with a salvage vessel, the Triton, and raised the stranded vessel. (3) As a reward for his prompt action he was promoted to second-captain aboard the Badine and in 1724 he returned to India.

In 1725 he took part in an expedition to recapture the French factory at Mahé. The Governor of Pondicherry, Lenoir, was alarmed because the local Indian ruler, who was on friendly terms with the English at Tellicherry, had expelled the French from Mahé. This factory which was the chief centre of the pepper trade in India was vital to the Company. Lenoir sent a squadron of four ships to recapture the town and La Bourdonnais joined the expedition. The town was bombarded and a fort was taken and shortly afterwards the Company officials were able to return. (4)

When he arrived in Pondicherry La Bourdonnais decided to resign his command. This was a somewhat unusual course of action as he was only twenty-six years of age and he could confidently have expected promotion to the rank of captain before he reached thirty. A command in the 'première navigation' of the East India Company was the aim of all

(1) Bourde de la Rogerie. *Les Bretons aux Iles*. p. 142-144.

(2) *Mémoire* (1750) p. 7-9.

(3) *Recueil Trimestriel*. Vol II. *Comment La Bourdonnais passa de Bourbon à l'Ile de France en 1723*. p. 323-331.

(4) *Mémoire* (1750) p. 8; see de la Farelle. *Mémoire sur la prise de Mahé*. (1725)

officers in the mercantile marine. During a normal voyage of 20 months to and from India a captain received pay amounting to 4,000 livres and, in addition, he was allowed to carry, free of charge, merchandise worth 16,000 livres on the outward voyage and a wide variety of foodstuffs and textiles from the East on the return voyage. La Bourdonnais, however, realised the immense possibilities of private trading in the East and he came to some agreement with Lenoir and certain members of the Council of Pondicherry. A joint stock company was formed and a ship, the *Pondicherry*, was fitted out, probably in 1726.

The *Mémoire* (1750) does not give any detailed information about this phase of his career. He appears to have traded in India, the East Indies and the Red Sea. In a report on trading conditions in India, sent by him to de Moras, a syndic of the Company, in 1733, he criticised the organisation of French factories in India and his remarks throw some light on his own trading activities. He pointed out that the shortage of ready cash resulted in extra expenditure by the Company. All local contracts ended in January of each year and staff appointed in India tried to find temporary jobs until June when the Company ships arrived and when new contracts were made. In the report La Bourdonnais wrote, "Le marchand rencherit ses cotons, les fileuses, les tisserands, les porteurs, les blanchisseuses, les batteurs, tous profitent généralement du besoin qu'on a d'eux." He explained that private merchants purchased supplies throughout the year at steady prices and that he himself, by gaining information about market conditions in the interior, had been able to amass a small fortune. (1)

On one of his voyages he gave assistance to two Portuguese ships which were in distress. He escorted them to Moka where he acted as mediator in a dispute about the payment of tribute between the representatives of the Emir of Yemen and the Portuguese. In recognition of his services the Viceroy at Goa offered him employment as officer in charge of naval operations on the Coromandel coast. At this time the Viceroy was planning to lead an expedition against native rulers on the East Coast of Africa. In 1751 La Bourdonnais agreed to enter the service of Portugal and he was decorated with the Order of Christ. The attack on East Africa did not take place but he had several engagements with Maratta pirates on the Malabar Coast. Although his position as a Portuguese naval commander was military in character, it is probable that his activities were largely of a commercial nature. (2)

La Bourdonnais probably resigned his Portuguese command towards the end of 1752. Early in 1753 he was living in Pondicherry. At some time during the early seventeenthirties he had decided to rejoin the French East India Company. He had realised that the Governor of an Indian factory had unlimited opportunities for private trading and it appears that he was determined to secure a governorship in one of the Company trading posts. It is impossible to determine whether he expected to obtain the governorship of an Indian factory in 1753. Senior commands were frequently given to the highest bidder and in 1753 La Bourdonnais was a rich man. It is, however, highly probable that he had received information that the governorship of Ile de France and Bourbon was likely to be available in 1754 and that he decided to put himself forward as a candidate. The appointment of an ex-captain in the 'première navigation' to an Indian governorship would have provoked a storm of criticism and La Bourdonnais probably realised that the governorship of the Isles might lead to other more lucrative appointments. Lenoir, the Governor of Pondicherry, had served in the Isles before his transfer to India and senior officials in the Company regarded the governorship of the two islands as a stepping-off post for Pondicherry and Chandanagore.

(1) *Cultru. Duplex*. p. 55-58, 200.

(2) *Mémoire* (1750) p. 8-9.

The Governor of Ile de France, de Maupin, had remained in the island for a longer period than any of his predecessors and he was due for recall. The directors were dissatisfied with his work and they laid the blame for the slow rate of progress in the island on his shoulders. They were particularly critical of the manner in which he had handled a mutiny in February, 1733, when 30 soldiers had deserted and taken refuge in the forest and forced the Governor to agree to a general amnesty. In 1734 the directors were considering suitable candidates to replace him when the news reached them that the troops had mutinied once more. Cossigny was considered for the command but the directors finally decided that he was unsuitable; he was a martinet whose acid tongue and quarrelsome nature provoked the administrators in Bourbon to expel him from the Isles. (1)

In 1733 La Bourdonnais returned to France and shortly after his arrival he presented reports on trading conditions in India to Orry de Fulvy, the Inspector-General of the Company, and to de Moras, one of the syndics of the Company. The reports contained serious charges against the administration of Lenoir whom La Bourdonnais accused of incompetence, injustice and nepotism. (2) In November, 1733 he married Marie-Anne Le Brun de la Franquerie who was the daughter of a captain in the 'première navigation' and the niece of a senior official in the Company. La Bourdonnais had several interviews with the Controller-General and with Orry de Fulvy and in November 1734 he was offered the governorship of the Isles.

On 8 November, 1734 the directors formally announced the appointment, "estant informés des bonnes qualités, mœurs et conduite-ainsi que de son expérience dans la marine et le commerce." Two days later the necessary letters patent were granted at Fontainebleau, "pour en cette qualité y commander tant aux habitants des dits lieux, commis de la dite Compagnie, employés et autres Français et étrangers qui y sont établis..... de quelque qualité et condition qu'ils puissent être, qu'aux officiers, soldats et gens de guerre qui y sont... leur faire prêter le serment de fidélité qu'ils nous doivent, faire vivre les habitants en union et concorde... contenir les gens de guerre en bonne ordre et police, suivant nos règlements, et maintenir le commerce et trafic de la Compagnie dans les dites îles (3) et en notre nom leur rendre, en la dite qualité de Président des Conseils Supérieurs des Îles... la justice tant civile que criminelle... et généralement faire tout ce qu'il jugera à propos pour la conservation des dits comptoirs et commerce et la gloire de notre nom" (4)

The appointment to an important governorship of a man who was almost unknown in Company circles in Paris caused considerable surprise and speculation among senior officials. Dupleix was nonplussed and in a letter to Dumas he wrote: "La nomination de.... La Bourdonnais à votre place m'a surpris ainsi que toute l'Inde." To another correspondent he wrote: "les bras m'en sont tombés. Il faut croire que la tête a tourné à la Compagnie ou bien qu'elle veut perdre les îles; and again, "il n'a rien épargné pour obtenir ce poste, tout a été employé et il a beaucoup d'obligation à son épouse. Je n'en crois bien; elle est trop bien élevée pour avoir fait aucune bassesse, mais cependant ce diable de bruit ne vaut rien du tout. Tous les officiers des vaisseaux le disent." In a letter written in 1737 to his brother, Dupleix stated that La Bourdonnais had purchased the appointment for a bribe of between 20,000 and 30,000 livres which had been paid to the valet de chambre of Cardinal Fleury. (6)

(1) Crépin. Cossigny. p. 30.
 (2) Cultru. Dupleix. p. 15, 55-58.
 (3) La Bourdonnais was given permission to trade with Madagascar, the East coast of Africa and ports in the Red Sea and the Persian Gulf. Orry to La Bourdonnais. 11 December, 1734. Mémoire (1750) P.J. p. 3.
 (4) Mémoire (1750) P.J. p. 1-3.
 (5) Cultru. Dupleix; Dupleix to Dumas 19 December, 1735; Dupleix to Burat 4 August, 1735; Dupleix to La Farelle 19 December, 1735. p. 147-148, 153.
 (6) Ibid. p. 21.

Although there is no conclusive evidence to prove that La Bourdonnais purchased the governorship of the Isles there can be little doubt that he was prepared to go to almost any lengths to obtain this command. Nevertheless, prior to his appointment, he appears to have made a deep impression on both Orry, the Controller-General, and on his brother, Orry de Fulvy. The latter, who held the post of Inspector-General, was the most influential member of the board of directors of the Company from 1733 to 1745 and he gave La Bourdonnais his protection. "Il avait la protection de Fulvy," wrote Duplex in December, 1739, "qui le couvrait contre vents et marées." (1) It is possible that de Fulvy's protection of La Bourdonnais was not entirely disinterested and there were rumours current in India that he received substantial material benefits from his association with La Bourdonnais. (2)

La Bourdonnais left Lorient for Ile de France on 2 February, 1735, in the Duc de Bourbon. He had been given precise instructions to establish an efficient refitting and revictualling station in Port Louis; to maintain law and order; to strengthen the administration of the two islands; to investigate the state of agriculture in Bourbon, where there was over-production of coffee of inferior quality, and in Ile de France, where many of the planters relied entirely on loans and showed no initiative in developing their plantations. La Bourdonnais was instructed to strengthen the economy of the two islands by the introduction of new crops, to foster industry and to develop effective machinery for the recovery of debts. Thus although it is likely that La Bourdonnais, in accepting the post as Governor of Ile de France and Bourbon, was primarily concerned with his own private interests, he was, nevertheless, confronted with an undertaking which would have taxed the skill and perseverance of the most experienced administrator.

(1) Cyltru. Duplex. p. 21.
 (2) Ibid. p. 198, 200.

II. Public Works : The development of Port Louis. 1735-1744.

The directors of the French East India Company decided to develop Ile de France because a safe port was needed where ships of the 'première navigation', crossing the Indian Ocean, could take in supplies and undergo repairs. The island had two good natural harbours, one in the north-west, the other in the south-east. The first Governor, de Nyon, (1722-1725) believed that the south-east port, which had been used during the Dutch occupation, was the better of the two. It was named Port Bourbon and in December, 1727, the Company ordered the Provincial Council to establish a permanent harbour. "Elle s'est déterminée," wrote the directors, "à fixer au port du S.E. le principal établissement de cette île. C'est à ce port où désormais tous les vaisseaux aborderont par l'entrée et la sortie facile qu'il présente, et, la sûreté dont il est dans le mauvais temps; et quoiqu'il y ait en un sens quelque difficulté d'en sortir depuis le commencement d'Avril jusqu'à la fin de juillet, cette difficulté n'est pas cependant insurmontable... la Compagnie... souhaite que les ouvriers et les noirs y soient tous employés aux fortifications et aux bâtiments, conformément aux plans que M. Jumas a importés et à ceux que M. de Nyon a laissés." (1) Furthermore, they informed the Council that they had appointed a harbour-master, a pilot, a carpenter, a cook and 20 masons and that they were sending two long boats and two rowing boats. (2)

The harbour at Port Bourbon or Grand Port, as it was sometimes called, was particularly suitable for receiving incoming ships from Europe and India. For most of the year the island comes within the S.E. Trade wind belt and ships were able to enter the harbour with ease. It was, however, difficult to leave and ships were sometimes held up for weeks in the bay. From 1728-1729 the Company received a number of complaints from their captains who were afraid of entering the harbour owing to the difficulties they encountered in sailing out and therefore the directors asked for further information regarding the N.W. Port.

The N.W. Port was surrounded by mountains which gave excellent protection against cyclones and, moreover, it was easy to defend. Ships could leave the harbour with comparative ease provided they had a pilot aboard. In addition, entry into the port presented few problems. De Maupin, Governor from 1729-1735, recommended this port to the directors who decided to send a highly skilled engineer, Charpentier de Cossigny, to investigate its potentialities and to report on various harbours in the Indian Ocean. (3) At the same time they ordered captains in the 'première navigation' who were calling at Ile de France to anchor in the N.W. Port. Cossigny arrived in Ile de France in 1732 and he later reported that the N.W. Port was the most suitable anchorage in the Indian Ocean. (4)

The anchorage at St. Denis in Bourbon which was the main port of call for ships crossing the Indian Ocean was considered to be unsafe and for some time the directors had felt that alternative ports should be found (1) Loughon. Correspondance. Vol I. The Company to the Provincial Council of Ile de France. 31 December. 1727. p. 58-59.

(2) Recueil Trimestriel. Vol VI. Correspondance des Administrateurs. p. 46.

(3) Ibid. Vol I. Conditions faites à Cossigny par la Compagnie des Indes. 18 July. 1731. p. 239-252.

(4) Ibid. Vol II. Rapport de Cossigny aux Directeurs. 1732. p. 255-284.

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elsewhere, in Madagascar, the lesser island groups north of the Isles, and even in South Africa. In December, 1733, their fears were justified when a cyclone struck Bourbon. In St. Denis, two ships, the *Vénus* and the *Oiseau*, were lost and three other ships were badly damaged. The administrators informed the Council of Pondicherry that, "jamais on n'a vu dans cette île tant de vents... et d'orage... le vent... fit venir à terre le *Vau*, la *Vénus* et le bateau l'*Oiseau*, qui périrent dans les lames et sur les roches." (1) Six ships which were anchored in St. Paul had managed to put out to sea and they were able to return when the storm had subsided. After this event Ile de France became the principal port of call for Company ships. Certain ships, however, were ordered to call at Bourbon each year in order to collect the annual report of the administrators. In 1734 Cossigny returned to Ile de France with instructions to equip the N.W. Port. The Provincial Council was directed to find workmen and building materials and Cossigny himself brought a number of workmen from Bourbon.

Cossigny was an energetic and talented man but he was also bad-tempered and obstinate. (2) He remained on friendly terms with Dumas, the Governor of the Isles, for several months but in May, 1733, the two men quarrelled. Cossigny had been given extensive powers of inspection and he enjoyed the protection of Orry. He was therefore determined to act independently and he refused to cooperate with the administrators in the two islands. "C'est un homme qui parle en maître," wrote the Councillors in Bourbon, "Il veut décidé de tout et sans appel, nous traitans publiquement avec mépris et menaces." (3) He gathered information about the Company employees and reported their shortcomings to Orry and in December, 1733, Dumas was forced to write to the Controller-General in order to defend himself against the attacks of Cossigny.

Cossigny was particularly critical of the work of de Maupin, the Governor of Ile de France. When the former arrived in the island in 1734 a revolt had broken out in the garrison. The Governor had employed the soldiers on building operations in the N.W. Port but the work was unpopular and finally the soldiers mutinied and took to the forests. De Maupin was obliged to grant a pardon, although the six ringleaders later agreed to give themselves up. Cossigny organised a council of war and the leaders were condemned to death. They were publicly hanged and peace was restored. (4)

The mutiny disorganised the life of the colony and delayed the work of construction. Cossigny had planned to begin work immediately but he was unable to find skilled workmen and building materials were scarce and very expensive. In December, 1734, he wrote to the Company describing his problems: "La totale insubordination, indiscipline et mutinerie répandus dans les ouvriers de toute espèce et de toute couleur, la plus grande partie ayant abandonné les ateliers pour se livrer entièrement à la débauche, à la fainéantisme et à l'indiscipline" (5) The workmen in the island were by tradition difficult to control; the administrators in Ile de France in their despatches to the Company normally described them as drunkards and good-for-nothings. De Maupin had appointed a labour-supervisor but after two months he had been forced to resign. (6)

- (1) Recueil Trimestriel. Vol VI. Correspondance des Administrateurs. The Superior Council of Bourbon to the Council of Pondicherry. 15 May, 1734. p. 234.
- (2) Cossigny was born in Marseilles in 1690 and served as an infantry officer during the War of the Spanish Succession. In 1715 he was appointed an ingénieur ordinaire du roi and in 1731 he was offered a post in the Isles by Orry. See Crépin. Cossigny.
- (3) Recueil Trimestriel. Vol VI. Correspondance des Administrateurs. The Superior Council of Bourbon to the Company. 3 April, 1734. p. 189.
- (4) Cossigny. Mémoire sur l'Ile de France. (1764) Crépin. Cossigny. p. 59.
- (5) ~~Pezzen~~ ^{Hommes} Document. s réunis. p. 20.
- (6) Toussaint. Port Louis. Préface. p. viii.

Within a month of his arrival Cossigny had quarrelled violently with the Company agents in Ile de France. During his stay he managed to complete the building of a house for himself, work was commenced on a windmill and some additions were made to a warehouse which had been partially built in 1731, but his relations with the Provincial Council grew steadily worse. Finally the Superior Council of Bourbon voted in favour of his expulsion from the islands. (1) Thus by 1735 scarcely any progress had been made in the N.W. Port. The question of building a suitable refitting station was particularly urgent since the only other repair depot in the East, at Pegou in Lower Burma, was unsafe owing to political unrest and after 1740 it was dangerous for French shipping to remain for long periods in Pegou.

Apart from the immediate problems entailed in building a port the fact remains that Ile de France was not yet sufficiently developed to meet the demands made upon it by the creation of a revictualling station. A substantial increase in food production was essential. There were in 1735 about 60 colonists in Ile de France and it appears that they were barely able to feed themselves. La Bourdonnais wrote in his report in 1740: "Il était comme d'une règle annuelle que les soldats, les ouvriers et les habitants... fussent une partie de l'année dans le bois à vivre de la chasse." (2) It was therefore necessary to supply the greater part of the inhabitants' needs by means of imports. Again, the building of a hospital in the N.W. Port and the arrival of sailors with scurvy, and the revictualling of ships with crews of 150-200 men, was a very difficult question in an island with a population of less than 1,000 inhabitants, of which a large number were clerks, workmen and soldiers. Furthermore, in 1735 a cyclone followed by drought had reduced the colony to starvation.

The N.W. Port lay in a magnificent bay with two coral islands, Ile des Tonneliers and Ile de Fort Blanc at the entrance. A chain of volcanic peaks rose behind the bay. It was a perfect site for a port but there was no adequate provision for anchoring ships and the boats in the harbour were not in a fit condition to discharge cargo. Two ships which had been condemned, the Bourbon and the Danae, had been run aground during the governorship of de Maupin but they served no useful purpose and lay rotting in the bay. There were no buoys and no facilities for careening ships. The only naval store in the bay was a hut on Ile des Tonneliers with a staff of 20 men who maintained the flags at the entrance to the harbour and rowed the pilot out to incoming ships. (3) The town was situated on the coastal flats. A clearing had been made in the woods which ran down to the water's edge and a number of buildings had been erected; a house for the Governor, huts where the soldiers were lodged, a small hospital, a guard-room, a chapel, a house for the chief engineer and two or three store-houses. There were a number of wooden huts which housed the Company clerks, workmen and slaves. (4)

Owing to the shortage of stone-masons and skilled builders many of the buildings were constructed of wood and therefore the town suffered severe damage during a cyclone. The cyclone of 1728 caused widespread damage to the small settlement: "Le grand magasin de feuilles de la Compagnie," wrote the administrators, "fut le premier totalement abattu et plusieurs effets et marchandises furent accablés sous les ruines. L'église et le gouvernement eurent le même sort, et toutes les cases (houses) ont été découvertes et panachées. Le poudrière... et (le) magasin de pierre fut aussi découvert." (5) Rebuilding was apparently very difficult and if the officers refused to cooperate it was out of the question. After a cyclone soldiers were paid 20 sous per day for labouring and 25 sous for bringing wood and leaves from the forests. (6) Cyclones in 1731, 1732, 1734

(1) Crépin. Cossigny. p. 30; Mémoire (1750) p. 12.
 (2) Mémoire (1740) p. 10.
 (3) Ibid. p. 27.
 (4) Toussaint. Port Louis. p. 24-25.
 (5) Recueil Trimestriel. Vol VI. Correspondance des Administrateurs. The Provincial Council of Ile de France to the Company. 29 Feb. 1728. p. 41-42.
 (6) Ibid. p. 42.

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and 1735 caused serious damage in the port. Thus the village could scarcely be termed a permanent settlement. The Company personnel and the troops frequently deserted the town when food was in short supply; the houses, storerooms and public buildings had to be rebuilt after a cyclone; there were no roads and water which was safe for drinking had to be carried a considerable distance.

The Company, however, was not interested in building a town at Port Louis. They instructed La Bourdonnais to build a quayside, to improve and develop harbour installations, to consolidate the existing Company buildings and to fortify the port. In other words, they wanted a fortified factory like the one in Pondicherry. The directors had found Cossigny's stay in the islands very expensive and the new Governor was directed to reduce expenditure, especially in building operations in Bourbon. From 1731-1734 the Company had spent about 125,000 livres in Ile de France alone in order to improve port facilities and the only results were a house, a lime-kiln and a partly constructed warehouse and windmill. (1)

The work of equipping and developing the N.W. Fort depended on four factors; a comprehensive plan, a disciplined labour force, efficient means of transport and a regular supply of building materials. Three engineers, de Nyon, de Sornay and Cossigny, had all drawn up plans for the project but they had made very little progress. The Company workmen were unskilled and insubordinate, there were no roads suitable for transporting timber and all carrying was done by slaves. The boats in the harbour were in a deplorable condition and owing to the lack of harbour facilities ships in the island squadron were usually sent to winter in Antongil Bay in Madagascar. Thus building materials were expensive and scarce; indeed, when La Bourdonnais arrived in 1735 the Company workmen were assembling a boat which had been sent from Bourbon. As he wrote later in his report in 1740: "Tout était à faire dans cette île et qu'une infinité de choses y sont si relatives entre-elles que l'on ne peut travailler à l'une sans penser à l'autre, ce qui m'a obligé d'entrer tout d'un coup dans les plus petits détails de toutes les parties... personne avant moi n'avait fait couper de bois... n'y s'ier des bordages, formé des grands chemins, attelé des charrettes et fait des quais pour construire des bateaux et des navires." (2)

Shortly after his arrival La Bourdonnais presented a plan to the Provincial Council, "à établir un port où les vaisseaux pourraient trouver tous les secours possible tant du côté des radoubes et de la construction que des autres parties... et aussitôt je pris des arrangements... de former une marine où il y eut de la suite." (3) It is convenient to study the development of Port Louis as harbour, factory and town, in sections, although as La Bourdonnais wrote in the report of 1740, "La navigation des Iles, la Marine du port, et la construction sont trois parties si relatives les unes aux autres, que je ne puis en faire des distinctions marquées sans m'exposer à des répétitions inévitables." (4) It is proposed, then, to examine his policy in its several aspects; the organisation of a harbour labour force; the extension and improvement of harbour installations; shipbuilding; the reorganisation of the island squadron; building operations on land; the fortification of the factory and finally the development of Port Louis as a civic centre.

In 1755 La Bourdonnais set up a well-equipped naval store in Port Louis. In the following year he established a harbour force which was composed of a captain, a lieutenant, two pilots, two harbourmasters and two assistants, eight stevedors (patrons) and four watchmen to guard the

(1) Mémoire (1740) p. 32.

(2) Ibid. p. 28.

(3) Ibid. p. 28.

(4) Ibid. p. 26.

pontoons. A number of sailors were given the duty of guarding the harbour launches, three of which served as pilot ships to guide incoming vessels to an anchorage, two others being employed as lighters. They were also available for carrying building materials. In addition, there were five dinghies to be used for general harbour duties.

In 1740 La Bourdonnais estimated that he would require a total labour force of 160 to man the harbour. (2) The Company sent out sailors, pilots, carpenters, caulkers, rope-makers, blacksmiths, masons and locksmiths from and from 17 December, 1727, to 23 March, 1740, 237 men were recruited for service in the Isles. They were paid between 300-600 livres per annum for a three year tour with free passages on the outward and homeward journeys. (3) The 'état général de la dépense... au comptoir de l'île de Bourbon' gives the following information about the annual wages of workmen in 1737: harbour masters, 800 livres; master carpenters, 690 livres; blacksmiths, 550 livres; coopers, 500 livres; joiners, 360 livres; locksmiths, 250 livres. (4) If these wages are compared with the annual earnings of salaried officials of the Company it would appear that skilled workers received fairly good wages. At this time a chief clerk in Bourbon was paid between 800-900 livres per annum and members of the council from 1,500 -2,000 livres. (5) Salaried officials also received a wine and spirit allowance, a percentage of the export of cash crops and it appears that they were able to augment their income in a number of other ways.

It was, however, difficult to attract a sufficient number of skilled workmen and sailors to serve in Ile de France and, therefore, the new Governor was forced to use Indian sailors and slaves from West Africa to man the harbour. Lascars, as they were called by the Portuguese, were brought from Pondicherry and Surat but it was always difficult to recruit them because they feared that when they arrived in the Isles they would either lose their freedom or find that they were not allowed to practise the Hindoo religion. The first Lascars had arrived in 1729. They usually returned to India when their three-year contract had expired. (6) It seems that they were not particularly good workers. In 1738 the Superior Council of Bourbon wrote to the Company: "Ces Lascars indiens, quelque favorablement que pense M. le Gouverneur, sont uniquement propres à manoeuvrer dans un vaisseau d'un beau temps, mais réellement très mols, sans courage ni force, et par conséquent peu propres au cabotage continuel que nos chaloupes sont obligés de faire, et dans lesquelles, aussitôt qu'ils sont hors de la vue du port, ils ne veulent pas donner un coup d'aviron, dussent-ils périr cent fois." (7) Nevertheless, some 20-30 Lascars worked in the harbour whilst La Bourdonnais was Governor. Of the cargoes of slaves from West Africa which arrived in Port Louis in 1735 and 1737, 60 slaves were detailed to work in the harbour in 1735 and two years later La Bourdonnais increased the number to 100. This force, supervised by European officers, was sufficient for routine harbour duties.

Harbour installations were extended and reorganised. The entrance to Port Louis was marked by an avenue of buoys with flags and a post was established on one of the hills above the port to maintain a light to guide ships at night. Two ships which were no longer fit for service, the Diane and the Duc d'Anjou, were moored in the harbour as pontoons and used for caulking and cleaning operations. In 1735 a site for a dry dock was chosen. Storehouses were built to accommodate harbour tackle and local workmen were encouraged to make rope, pulleys and pumps.

(1) Mémoire (1740) p.29.
(2) Ibid. p.72.
(3) Bourde de la Rogerie. Les Bretons aux Iles. p.155-158.
(4) Recueil Trimestriel. Vol I. p.507p508.
(5) A lieutenant in the 'première navigation' was paid 120 livres per month, he was allowed to trade privately and he received a special allowance if a voyage exceeded twenty months. A captain in the island garrison was paid between 1,000 and 1,100 per annum, together with a wine and spirit allowance.

(6) Recueil Trimestriel. Correspondance des Administrateurs. p204, 209, 223.
(7) Mémoire (1740) Note. 66. p.133.

"J'ai établis," he reported to Orry in 1740, "une cordérie... j'ai un poulleyeur qui nous fournit d'excellents poulleys et surtout des pompes meilleures que celles de France." (1) An island at the entrance to the 'bassin Caudan', on which a powder magazine had been constructed, was joined by a causeway to a section of the mainland where the Company had reserved a site for the building of a headquarters. It was the intention of the Governor to use the landward side of the causeway for building and careening ships. A narrow bay, 'le Bassin des Chaloupes', was deepened and enclosed by two jetties and in this bay La Bourdonnais constructed a machine for raising ships of 150 tons above sea level for scraping and repairing. From 1735-1744 a considerable number of ships were refitted in the port. (2)

The smaller craft in the harbour and the frigates and sloops in the 'seconde navigation' were in a bad state of repair. La Bourdonnais was determined not only to renovate existing ships but also to create a shipbuilding industry. Hitherto, materials for shipbuilding had been imported from France and Bourbon; commenting on this in the report of 1740 he wrote: "Quels frais pour porter du bois dans une île qui n'est que bois et où il ne manquait que de l'industrie." (3) He began by constructing small boats for the harbour and when the port had a full complement he sold some long boats to local fishermen. Later, harbour launches were constructed for export to Bourbon. The labour problem was overcome by the introduction of a scheme to apprentice slaves to European shipbuilders and in 1740 there were 158 slaves learning trades, of which 58 were carpenters, 18 caulkers, 6 sailmakers, 6 coopers, 4 pulleymakers, 6 ropemakers and 60 apprentice sailors. (4)

When a corps of skilled shipworkers had been trained the governor was able to plan a more ambitious shipbuilding programme. A 100 ton lighter was built and later two barges for carrying sand and ballast, a ship for carrying water, a barge for transporting firewood to incoming vessels and a specially constructed boat for heating pitch for caulking. A dredging barge was also built to keep the harbour free from silt and mud. These ships were for general port duties and in 1739 La Bourdonnais began to build bigger ships for the 'seconde navigation'. During his first tour of duty two ships were built, a schooner, the Créole, of 80 tons, and the Nécessaire of a 150 tons. The latter was almost complete in 1740 when the Governor left Ile de France: "ce sera un très beau navire," he reported to Orry, "et qui aurait été bien plutôt fini sans que nous avons été contraint de faire des radoubs considérables." (5)

The directors did not approve of the shipbuilding programme and in 1739 La Bourdonnais was ordered to discontinue the work on the Nécessaire. The Duc d'Anjou, however, had been stripped and converted into a pontoon and since the fittings were available it was decided to continue the work of construction. (6) In 1740 La Bourdonnais made a plea for the continuation of his shipbuilding programme. "Il ne s'agit donc," he informed Orry, "désormais que l'entretenir de plus vingt à vingt cinq maîtres charpentiers, quatre à cinq calfats et deux à trois bons forgerons... un objet de vingt mil livres par année; et manque de cette petite dépense la Compagnie perdra les trois quarts de l'utilité qu'elle peut retirer de son port et de son relâche." (7) In the same report he pointed out that he could build a ship of between 800-600 tons each year if the Company would agree to cooperate. In

In 1740 the French shipyard at Pegou in Lower Burma became unsafe, and,

(1) Mémoire (1740) p. 30.
 (2) Ibid. p. 31-32.
 (3) Ibid. p. 28.
 (4) Ibid. p. 30, note XXIX. p. 136.
 (5) Ibid. p. 31; Toussaint. Port Louis. p. 31.
 (6) Ibid. Note XXIX. p. 135.
 (7) Ibid. p. 73.

Moreover, war broke out in Europe. When La Bourdonnais returned to France he was therefore able to persuade the directors to support a modest shipbuilding programme in Port Louis. He returned to Ile de France in 1741 with a master shipbuilder, 30 shipbuilders, 2 wood carvers and a gilt painter and in 1742 the Company sent him 24 carpenters. These workmen trained slave-apprentices and by 1743 the shipyard had completed two frigates, the *Utile* (250 tons) and the *Insulaire* (350 tons) and several long boats which were sent to Bourbon to carry coffee from St. Pierre and St. Benoît to St. Denis, and to transport coral from Ile de France. (1) The *Insulaire* was an expensive ship to build and when it was finally launched it was found to be too heavy. Some timber was removed from the keel and the ship was successfully floated. (2) In 1741 the Company declared that from 1 January, 1742, to 31 December, 1747, the two islands could trade freely with Indian ports and with France and in 1743 the directors advised the Governor to limit shipbuilding. The administrators were ordered to sell or rent all ships in the island squadron save the *renommée* to private merchants. (3) The free-trade experiment was not a success but shipbuilding in Port Louis was discontinued. In 1746 La Bourdonnais left Ile de France for India.

In December, 1733, the directors reorganised their merchant fleet. The ships of the Company were divided into two sections, the 'première navigation' which comprised ships with a freight-carrying capacity exceeding 450 tons, and the 'seconde navigation' which contained smaller ships with a freight-carrying capacity of 200-300 tons. In fact, the division indicated the kind of voyage undertaken by the ships; those in the 'première navigation' were used for voyages beyond the Cape of Good Hope; those in the 'seconde navigation' were used for communications in and between the islands in the Indian Ocean and for slave-trading in Madagascar and West Africa. There was a difference in the scales of pay; captains in the 'première navigation' received 200 livres per month whereas in the 'seconde navigation' they were paid 150 livres per month. In 1737 there were 25 ships in the 'première navigation' and ten in the 'seconde navigation'. The normal life of a ship in the first category was 14 years and that of a ship in the island squadron was from 4 to 5 years. (4)

In 1731 there were 5 ships in the island squadron, the *Legère*, the *subtile*, the *Indien*, the *Oiseau* and the *Hirondelle*. In the following year a Portuguese interloper was siezed, renamed the *St. Jean l'Evangeliste* and added to the squadron. The *Diane* which arrived from Europe in 1732 was retained in the Isles and the *Astree* joined the island fleet in the same year. The *Atalante* was added in 1734 and the *Dauphine* in 1735. Two other ships, the *Griffon* and the *Jupiter* were also in commission by 1735. (5) When La Bourdonnais arrived he found that the squadron had been neglected: "De toutes les embarcations que j'ai trouvées aux Isles," he wrote, "il n'y en avait pas une qui ne fut dans un état pitoyable." (6) Owing to the lack of harbour installations and the shortage of food, ships were sent to winter in Madagascar and they frequently remained there for nine or ten months in a single voyage. This made it difficult to arrange for the exchange of sailors, who had served in the Isles for three years or more, for newly-arrived sailors. Moreover, a Company shipping office which could arrange for the payment of sailors in the 'seconde navigation' had not been established and crews were given bills of credit which could be drawn on the head office at Lorient. These, however, were frequently lost or sold for food and drink. (7)

(1) Loughon. Correspondance. Vol IV. Introduction. p. XXXVIII.

(2) Recueil Trimestriel. Vol I. Ile de France towards 1755. A Dalrymple. p. 360.

The *Insulaire* ended its career in India.

(3) Loughon. Correspondance. Vol IV. Introduction. p. XXXIX.

(4) Cultru. Dupleix. p. 24-27, p. 34.

(5) Mémoire (1740) Note 68. p. 134; Loughon. Correspondance. Vol. IV. Introd. p. XL.

(6) Ibid. p. 27.

(7) Ibid. p. 27.

The new Governor established a shipping office and all accounts were in future sent to the head-office at Lorient. The shipping office also arranged for the exchange of crews. Ships in the island squadron were overhauled and renovated and instructions were given to ships' captains that voyages to Madagascar should not take more than three months. Furthermore captains in the 'seconde navigation' were given an allowance of 35 sous per day to provide food and wine for their officers. Before the arrival of La Bourdonnais the Company had provided the food and wine served at the captain's table but this had proved expensive.

During the seventeen thirties there was a constant shortage of manpower for the ships in the island squadron and although the Company engaged sailors in Lorient for service in the Isles La Bourdonnais tried to find alternative sources of recruitment. He realised that it was too expensive to keep European sailors in the Isles and he wanted to replace members of the lower deck by Lascars, and French officers by colonists from Bourbon. Lascars were already recruited for the 'seconde navigation' but they were coastal sailors who rarely ventured out of sight of land and they did not prove satisfactory for the long and arduous voyages of ships of this class. In the report of 1740 La Bourdonnais suggested training selected colonists who would slowly replace all French officers in the squadron. "Cependant," he wrote, "le mieux serait d'avoir des officiers comme il faut, capables d'inspirer des sentiments aux jeunes gens des colonies dont il faudrait peu à peu composer la marine des Iles." (1)

In 1741 the directors advised the administrators in Bourbon to publicise the fact that the Company was prepared to accept ensigns 'ad honores' and student pilots aboard ships of the 'première navigation'. (2) At this time there was no place in the economy of Bourbon for young men without capital and the directors hoped that service at sea would provide an alternative career to that of planting. The colonists, however, were unwilling to go to sea; Bourbon did not possess a good port; navigation was extremely difficult and therefore there was no tradition of seamanship. Furthermore, if a colonist joined the crew of a ship his action led to almost complete social ostracism; it was only the poorest class of white which performed manual tasks.

When help was needed in Pondicherry in 1741 La Bourdonnais was hard pressed to find a sufficient number of recruits to man the ships for the expedition. He again tried to recruit local men by promises of free food and regular promotion if they would sign on in the island squadron, but he does not appear to have been successful and he was forced to ask planters for faithful slaves who wished to be sailors. He was, therefore, compelled to ask the directors to continue the recruitment of sailors in Europe. In March, 1740, there were 282 French sailors in the Isles; La Bourdonnais needed 400 to enable him to organise an equitable system of reliefs. In 1741 the Company sent 200 men to the Isles, in 1742, 150 and in 1743, 150. After 1743 recruitment ceased because the Company had given permission for free trade in the Isles and the old system of taking a limited number of sailors from ships arriving from Europe was reestablished. In 1744 when La Bourdonnais was preparing his expedition to India the shortage of sailors was so acute that he was constrained to recruit faithful slaves. (3)

From 1735-1740 two of the ships in the island squadron were lost at sea; in 1737 the *Atalante* disappeared during a cyclone and in 1739 the *Subtile* was lost off the Malabar Coast. During the same period, however, the fleet carried 3,500 slaves, 6,000 oxen and over 1,000,000 pounds of rice to Ile de France and Bourbon. In 1740 there appear to have been 7 ships in the squadron, the *Griffon* (450 tons), the *Furvy de l'Inde*

(1) Mémoire (1740) p. 71.

(2) Ibid. note, p. 195.

(3) Loughnon. Correspondance. Vol IV. Introduction. p. XLII-XLIII.

(400 tons), the Hironnelle (180 tons), the Aigle (70 tons) and 3 smaller craft. This number was wholly insufficient for the needs of the Isles. The report of 1740 contains an estimate of the number and type of ships required for service in the 'seconde navigation'. 10 ships are listed; 2 ships of between 450 and 600 tons with European crews, for carrying slaves and oxen; 2 of between 150 and 200 tons with European crews, for carrying slaves; 4 of between 80 and 100 tons with Lascar crews, for communication between the Isles and for transporting turtles from Rodrigues; 1 store ship of 600-700 tons and a ship of 300-400 tons for emergency duties. (1)

During La Bourdonnais' second tour of duty the island squadron was neither able to maintain adequate communications between the Isles nor to bring in a sufficient quantity of slaves and food. The directors had intended to replace unseaworthy ships in the squadron with ships which, like the Fulvy de l'Inde, had been built at Pegou in lower Burma, but after 1740, shipbuilding and even repair work was impossible in this port owing to internal troubles. La Bourdonnais tried to increase the number of ships in the 'seconde navigation' by means of a shipbuilding programme in Port Louis but from 1741-1745 additional ships from India and Europe were needed to safeguard supplies of slaves and food. In 1741 the Jupiter and the Héron brought 50 slaves from Senegal; in 1743 the Duc d'Orléans and the St. Gérard each brought 50 slaves; in 1744 the Héron and the St. Gérard carried 60 slaves and a private merchant imported an unknown number in 1745. The Governor who wished to establish trade relations with China, East Africa and the Cape was hard pressed to find ships for these projects and in 1741 he was forced to retain two ships of the 'première navigation' for the expedition to Pondicherry. (2)

In 1735 La Bourdonnais drew up plans for the construction of a factory in the N.W. Port. The Company had reserved a large area of land in the port for the building of a fortified trading post but prior to the arrival of the new Governor most of the buildings were of a temporary character. Two engineers, de Sornay and Cossigny, had submitted plans to the provincial Council but they were unable to put them into operation; from 1731-1735 the only buildings completed were a lime kiln and a house for the chief-engineer. In 1735 an engineer named Gerbaud was supervising the construction of a windmill and a warehouse but the workmen, according to La Bourdonnais, were incompetent, "accoutumés à l'ivrognerie et à la license, fruits d'une grande oisiveté." (3) In addition, materials were scarce and expensive, the roads were non-existent and the only form of transport was by slave labour.

Shortly after his arrival La Bourdonnais issued a code of regulations for the Company workmen in order to improve discipline. In 1737 he tried to check drunkenness among the workmen by the introduction of a new scheme for allocating brandy. At this time skilled workers received a brandy allowance valued at 9 livres per month and unskilled workers an allowance worth 6 livres per month, with the result, according to La Bourdonnais; "Ils ont plus qu'il ne leur faut de boisson, puisqu'ils sont presque toujours ivres." (4) From January, 1738, onwards, brandy could only be obtained in exchange for a voucher which the workers bought at the Company store. Employees who did not drink or who did not wish to take their full allowance of brandy were thus able to use their allowance for buying food and merchandise. (5) The Governor also introduced an apprenticeship scheme in the workshops and on the building sites and by 1740 there were 137 apprentices (64 slaves and 73 Indians). Finally, the issue of tools was regulated and in 1739 workmen were given a tool allowance which varied according to the status of the individual. (7)

(1) Mémoire (1740) p. 71-72.

(2) Loughon. Correspondance. Vol IV. Introduction. p. XLIII-XLV.

(3) Mémoire (1740) p. 33.

(4) Ibid. p. 105.

(5) Ibid. Note XIV. Regulations, Dec. 1737 and April, 1739. p. 103-110.

(6) Ibid. p. 35, Note XXIX. p. 143.

(7) Ibid. Note XXX. Regulation, 22 April, 1739. p. 145-155.

Communications were improved. The tracks between Port Louis, Moka and Pamplémousses were widened; carts were constructed and draught oxen were imported from Madagascar. The price of wood dropped considerably as a result. In 1735 timber cost between 2 and 3 sous per foot, but in 1740 the price was only 6 or 7 deniers. (1) Transport facilities improved and in 1740 La Bourdonnais reported; "Présentement dans les deux îles une pièce de bois ne coûte que 35 sous rendue au port, bois et charrois compris, tandis qu'autrefois elle coûtait des 120 journées de noirs de tirage seulement et quelquefois plus." (2)

The Superior Council of Bourbon frequently made contracts with private individuals who agreed to supply building materials and occasionally to construct buildings and roads. La Bourdonnais extended this system. A lieutenant in the garrison in Bourbon, de Granville, signed a contract with the Governor to supply planks and he brought a group of workmen to Ile de France. La Bourdonnais gave him a loan of 16 slaves from his own plantation but de Granville failed to fulfill the contract. Another agreement was made with de Roman, an ex-officer from the garrison in Ile de France, and contracts were also given to de St. Jean and Mallet. It appears that a regular supply was obtained and timber prices dropped by at least two thirds of the prices prevailing in 1735. (3) Contracts were made with two merchants, d'Aché and Danelle who agreed to supply lime. In 1735 the Company paid 2 livres 10 sous for a barrel of lime; in 1736, d'Aché received a loan of 8 slaves from the Company together with a further 10 and a waggon from La Bourdonnais and he agreed to supply lime at 30 sous a barrel. In 1738 the price dropped to 20 sous and in the following year another merchant cooperated with d'Aché and the price dropped to 16 sous. Similar contracts were made with planters with large slave gangs in Bourbon for supplying wood and constructing concrete platforms for drying coffee. (4)

In all of these transactions La Bourdonnais had a private interest since he supplied the contractors with slaves and waggons from his own estate. He also made use of Company work gangs. He took a proportion of the profits and since he was personally involved production increased. It appears, however, that the members of the superior Council of Ile de France were not entirely satisfied with this state of affairs and they put forward a proposal for the setting up of a lime and timber office. In April, 1739, La Bourdonnais called a meeting of the Council and read a report on all contracts made with local entrepreneurs. After hearing the report the councillors voted that the system should continue and asked for further tenders to be submitted to the Council. (5) There can be little doubt that the system led to abuses but La Bourdonnais and his associates at least produced the necessary materials and, moreover, prices fell. The Council in Ile de France did not have at its disposal a sufficient number of workmen to supply lime and timber and the participation of La Bourdonnais was probably necessary: "Personne ne voulant rien entreprendre que je ne fus son associé s'imaginant ne pouvoir perdre." (6)

The report of 1740 contains a list of the buildings completed in Port Louis from 1735-1740. (7) It would appear that about twenty public buildings were erected during the Governor's first tour of duty. In addition a number of quays, walled gardens and fortifications were built. By 1740 La Bourdonnais had succeeded in creating a factory in Port Louis. The settlement contained a government house, a chapel, several warehouses and shops, a powder magazine, an armoury, a canal for supplying fresh water,

(1) Mémoire (1740) p. 35.
 (2) Ibid. p. 14.
 (3) Ibid. p. 57-58, note, p. 187.
 (4) Ibid. note XXX. p. 145-153.
 (5) Ibid. p. 147-148.
 (6) Ibid. p. 58.
 (7) See appendix. Ibid. p. 140-142.

two windmills, a number of defence works and a hospital. (1)

The French East India Company maintained a number of hospitals in the overseas settlements owing to the prevalence of scurvy among ships' crews. In 1735, a wooden hut containing about thirty beds served as the hospital in Ile de France. Shortly after his arrival La Bourdonnais built similar huts and a stone kitchen, a temporary arrangement until a suitable site had been chosen for a new hospital. It was found that scurvy cases did not improve in Port Louis and in 1736 huts were built in Baie des Tortues. (2) Officers were sent to the Governor's private house, Monplaisir, a property in Pamplémousses which he had purchased in 1736. (3) In 1738 the Company decided to buy the house for use as a hospital. The outhouses were converted into wards accommodating 160 men, while in the house itself were twelve private rooms for the officers. (4)

La Bourdonnais realised that the hospital in Pamplémousses could only be of a temporary nature because his successor might decide to reside there during the summer months. He therefore began work on a hospital in Port Louis, between the Bassin des Chaloupes and the Trou Fanfaron. An aqueduct was built to bring a supply of fresh water to the hospital and provision was made for at least 240 beds. In March, 1741, St. Martin, the Director of Commerce in Ile de France, who was at that time Acting Governor, wrote to Orry, "J'ai fait aussi achever l'hôpital que M. de La Bourdonnais avait fait commencer, et où il y a actuellement 300 lits pour rétablir et rafraîchir les équipages de tous les vaisseaux de la Compagnie." (5)

There appear to have been a number of complaints about corruption and mal-administration in the hospital in Port Louis. In March, 1739, Cossigny informed Orry that whilst the Governor, councillors and guests were celebrating the opening of the new aqueduct the patients were dying of hunger. (6) In the report of 1740 La Bourdonnais explained the difficulty of providing fresh meat, especially during the cyclone season, and he claimed that he personally had supervised the administration of the hospital. "Je m'étais fait une règle cette dernière année," he wrote, "d'aller tous les jours à huit heures de matin à l'hôpital, et y emmener le major de semaine, un officier des troupes et un de chaque vaisseau, je visitais les malades, jugeais les différends, voyais la nourriture du jour et commandais un officier de terre et de marine pour se trouver à la distribution qui s'en faisais." (7) The dishonesty of the civilians who worked in the hospital prompted the Governor to suggest that it should be administered by a religious order but it was not until 1770 that the hospital was taken over by the Order of St. Paul de Chartres. (8)

(1) See diagram. p. 12

(2) Mémoire (1740) p. 15-16.

(3) Recueil Trimestriel. L'Ancien Jardin du Roi: Le Monplaisir. Vol I. p. 486.

(4) Mémoire (1740) p. 16.

(5) Ibid. Note 50. p. 126.

(6) Ibid. p. 127.

(7) Ibid. p. 21.

(8) Ibid. p. 58. In Bourbon a hospital with accommodation for 100 patients was built in St. Paul in 1734. The directors were dissatisfied with the administration of the hospital and in the same year they recommended: "une administration plus active et plus régulière," and they criticised the administrators for failing to provide a satisfactory ration of food and also for leaving sailors who were ill with scurvy for hours on the sand before they were finally taken to hospital. (Lougnon. Correspondance. vol II. The Company to the Superior Council of Bourbon. II October, 1734. p. 249.) In the report to Orry La Bourdonnais stated that he was satisfied that the hospital was functioning efficiently. (Mémoire (1740). p. 68.)

La Bourdonnais fortified the factory. In 1736 he constructed a gun position near a windmill which lay east of the hospital (batterie a la point Desforges) and in 1738 he built another battery on the site of the Place d'Armes, facing the sea, which was called batterie de la Salut. (1) In the following year he began work on two small forts on the Ile aux Tonneliers and on Ile du Fort Blanc. Work was probably begun in the same year on a fortified trench which ran from the salt pans at Caudan to the factory. (2) The Governor, however, was dissatisfied with the fortifications and in the report of 1740 he pointed out their weaknesses: "Il est vrai que l'entrée du port du N.O. sera défendu... Mais les ennemis peuvent venir par terre attaquer le port sans craindre les fortifications de l'entrée. La loge que nous faisons peut bien nous mettre à l'abri d'un coup de main, mais six canons de campagne y feront une brèche en six heures. Tous ces inconvenients m'avait fait penser qu'il nous fallait une citadelle." (3)

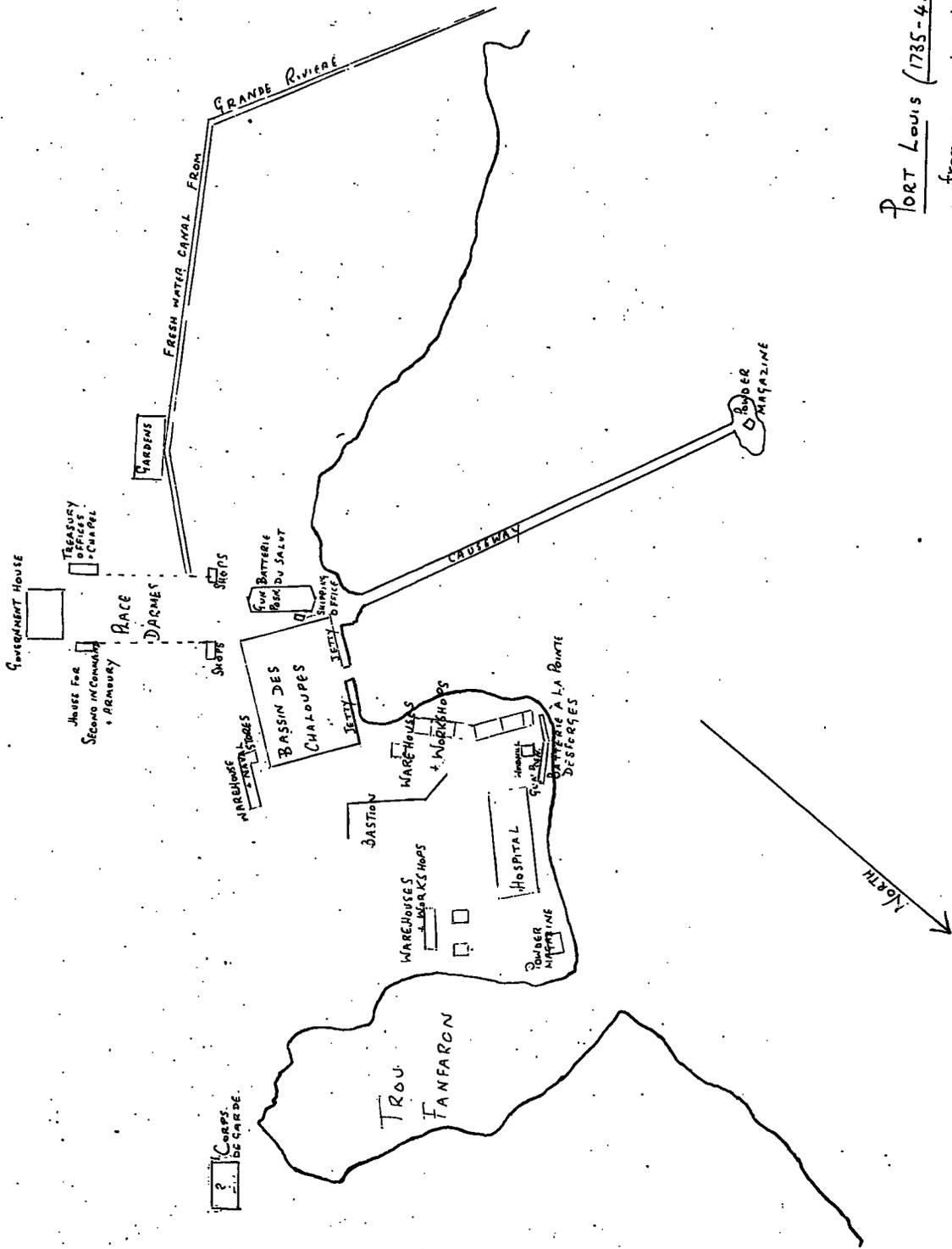
During his second tour of duty it appears that La Bourdonnais intended to concentrate all the Company warehouses in one locality, to construct a strong fortified wall around the settlement and to build forts and gun positions on the slopes of the mountains behind the port in order to defend the factory from an attack by land. A rectangular wall was built which enclosed the Place d'Armes and the parade ground and look-out posts were constructed. The entrance to the harbour was already guarded by two fortified islands and after 1741 the fortifications were strengthened. The breadth of the channel between the islands was about 500 yards wide and therefore all ships entering the harbour came within range of the cannons. The Governor also planned to build a citadelle on the plateau on the slopes of the Pouce which lay behind the town. (4)

The directors approved of the Governor's plans to build additional forts to protect Port Louis from an attack by sea but they forbade him to construct an elaborate defence system. They believed that batteries constructed in Grande Rivière Bay and Baie du Tombeau would prove adequate if an attack were made by land. In 1744, moreover, they ordered La Bourdonnais to suspend all building operations in the port.

La Bourdonnais was disturbed by the temporary nature of much of the property in Ile de France and he encouraged planters, Company workmen and others to build permanent homes. In the report of 1740 he described this problem which was common to all French colonies in the eighteenth century. "Généralement... les Français qui sont aux îles songent à amasser du bien pour s'en retourner dans la Patrie," he wrote, "les créoles sont trop fainéants... pour concevoir le dessin de s'établir mieux que leurs pères: de la vient que nos colonies... ressemblent toute la vie à des colonies nouvelles... Né dans un pays où quand on a du bien on se procure non seulement la nécessaire mais même l'agréable, rien n'est si naturel que de vouloir y retourner, parce que rien n'est si charmant que de vivre avec agrément. Ainsi pour retenir ou retarder au moins le départ des colons il faut donc... leur procurer non seulement l'utile mais encore l'agréable. C'est pourquoi j'ai commencé par les engager à bâtir solidement à la ville et à la campagne." (5)

During his first tour La Bourdonnais attempted to create a town of Port Louis. He planned to build a number of workmen's cottages but his partner, Petit, withdrew from the scheme and the plan did not go forward. (6) A public market was set up in Port Louis and the Governor encouraged workmen from India to settle in the town and open shops. Grants were made to this end and by 1740 there were a number of goldsmiths, tanners and ropemakers established in the town. (7) It appears that La Bourdonnais

(1) Mémoire (1740) Note, p. 191.
 (2) Toussaint. Port Louis. p. 36.
 (3) Mémoire (1740) p. 64.
 (4) Loughon. Correspondance. Vol. IV. Introduction. p. 11-111, Toussaint. Port Louis.
 (5) Mémoire (1740) p. 5-6.
 (6) Ibid. Note I. p. 85.
 (7) Ibid. p. 6.



PORT LOUIS (1735-44)

from a map in the French National Archives: 'Port du N.O.' dated 1739 (reproduced in 'Histoire', Documents Reunis + Toussaint, 'Port Louis.') & other maps + plans in the Mauritius Archives.

built public assembly rooms at some time during his second tour. (1) A supply of fresh water was brought to the town by means of a canal 7,200 Yards long, running from Grande Rivière, about one mile from Port Louis to a public fountain in Rue de la Pompe and subsidiary pipes carried water to the hospital and the harbour. (2)

The directors did not approve of the plan to develop a town round the harbour of Port Louis and, probably in 1739, they wrote to La Bourdonnais: "Nous ne comprenons pas votre manière de penser; vous vous éloignez très fort des vues de la Compagnie qui ne vous a nommé Gouverneur que pour lui faire construire des magasins, faire les logements pour les employés et les ouvriers, mettre les Iles en état de défense par de simples batteries, et lui procurer des...vivres...pour la relâche de ses vaisseaux...si vous réunissez tous les habitants dans une ville que deviendront les habitations où la présence du maître est nécessaire? Par qui seront-elles gardées, les maîtres étant absents? Le noir marron aurait un beau jeu!" (3)

La Bourdonnais advised the directors to continue the work of building a town when he made his report in 1740. "Vu les noirs ouvriers que la Compagnie a présentement," he wrote, "...les matériaux qui sont à grand compte, et...que la machine est montée et entraîné d'aller; vu... tous ces avantages, je serais du sentiment de bâtir tous les ouvrages que l'on peut prévoir être nécessaire pour établir les Iles au mieux... ainsi avec le temps les Iles parviendront...à un point de perfection où on ne les verra jamais si une fois l'on interrompt le cours des travaux!" (4) When La Bourdonnais returned to the Iles in 1741, however, conditions had changed; Europe was at war, and he expected that the conflict would spread to India. During his second tour he concentrated on fortifying the factory and on shipbuilding. In 1744 the Company ordered him to suspend all construction work and to reserve the materials at his disposal for repairs when necessary. Company workmen were to be sent back to France or hired out to private contractors. Shortly afterwards, La Bourdonnais' energies were to be diverted elsewhere.

(1) Mémoire (1740) Note. p. 85-86.

(2) Ibid. p. 17-18, Note. p. 125-126. Cossigny who was ingénieur du roi aux Iles from 1736-1739 wrote to Orry in March, 1739, criticising the construction of the canal. In fact, it had to be rebuilt in 1749 and again in 1756.

(3) St. Elme le Duc. Ile de France. p. 43.

(4) Mémoire (1740) P. 74.

(5) Loughon. Correspondance. Vol IV. The Company to the Superior Council of Ile de France, 11 April, 1744. p. 141-142.

II. Public Works: Transport and Communications in Ile de France and Bourbon.

Internal communications in the two islands were almost non-existent. In Ile de France there were several paths, "faits aux hasard selon que les passans les avaient frayés," (1) and in Bourbon likewise footpaths were the only means of communication between the various settlements, although in 1730 two private contractors had completed a road from St. Paul to St. Denis. (2) The usual method of transport was by means of slave labour. "C'est par ces chemins," La Bourdonnais informed Orry in 1740, "que tout venait des habitations sur le dos des noirs. figurez-vous, Monsieur, quel travail c'est de transporter à force d'homme par monts et par vaux deux à trois millions de livres par chaque année, soit en caffés ou autres denrées de dix- et même vingt lieux de distance." (3) The labour of between 40 and 50 slaves for three days was required to transport a beam of wood from the forests in the interior to the coastal villages. The transport of masts for ships which had been damaged was a major operation; in December, 1731 the Superior Council of Bourbon informed the Company: "Il a fallu cent hommes pendant huit jours pour rendre au bord de la mer un mât de hune de 55 pieds de long que nous venons de fournir au Royal-Philippe." (4)

The problem of communications was particularly acute in Bourbon where the tracks had been allowed to deteriorate. The island had a rapidly expanding population, coffee-production was on the increase and in addition there were a number of plantations, notably in the Quartière Rivière d'Abord, which were so isolated that local planters were unable to transport their coffee to the Company warehouses in St. Denis and St. Paul. (5) Shortly after his arrival in the Isles La Bourdonnais surveyed Bourbon and selected a number of routes which appeared suitable for road construction; as he himself wrote in the report of 1740: "Je sais que de la facilité de transport dépend la richesse des habitants de tout pays." (6) However, he quickly discovered that the Company lacked both the men and the materials to build new roads and he therefore decided to re-impose ordinary corvées for road building.

The Company had seigneurial rights in Bourbon and Ile de France and one of the most important was the power to exact a corvée. Ile de France was a small and underdeveloped colony in 1735 and it is probable that the administrators frequently waived their right to exact statute labour. In Bourbon, however, which had a population of 8,000 (2,000 Europeans and 6,000 slaves) in 1735, the planters were expected to contribute slaves for public works and to cooperate with the Company in developing the colony. There were two kinds of statute labour, ordinary corvées and extraordinary corvées. In 1724 the former were fixed at 2 days unpaid labour each year for every slave owned. The Company used this unpaid labour for road repairs and for building purposes. Extraordinary corvées were levied when the Company needed labour or materials for urgent work; for example, in 1735 La Bourdonnais, who had received instructions to fortify Bourbon, ordered the planters to contribute timber in beams or in planks in return for which the Company agreed to accept coffee crops for sale in Europe in proportion to the amount of

(1) Mémoire (1740) p. 13.

(2) Ibid. Note 32. p. III.

(3) Ibid. p. 13.

(4) Ibid. p. 13, Note 35, p. III-II2.

(5) Ibid. p. 13.

(6) Ibid. p. 13.

(7) Ibid. Note 33. p. II2.

timber supplied. (1)

Corvees were very unpopular, and, in the absence of a strong central authority in the island, it is probable that the planters failed to contribute either slaves or materials. The colonists in Bourbon had protested against the corvée regulations introduced in 1724 and two years later the directors agreed to limit contributions. In 1726, corvees were levied in proportion to the number of adult working slaves owned and ordinary statute labour was restricted to building operations for the Company. Although the new regulations were an honest attempt to find a reasonable method of assessment the Company did not benefit. Planters normally submitted false returns and, moreover, the administrators were desperately short of skilled workmen and building materials and consequently when slave gangs from various plantations were assembled in the Company workshops or on building sites it was difficult to find them any work to do. After 1726 the slave gangs do not appear to have been used for the work of repairing existing tracks and when a new road was built from 1729-1730 the Superior Council of Bourbon made a private arrangement with local entrepreneurs. (2)

The re-imposition of ordinary corvees for road building in 1735 did not produce any improvement in communications. Gangs of slaves were recruited from planters in the various districts through which tracks ran or through which the new roads were to be built but the Superior Council could not find any skilled road makers to direct the activities of the slave gangs. The Council introduced further measures in 1737 but no progress was made and therefore in the following year two road-surveyors were appointed. They were given a military rank, an annual salary of 1080 livres and certain emoluments, "jusqu'à l'entière perfection des chemins." (3) Under the new regulations of 1738 all planters were required to contribute two days unpaid slave-labour for every slave owned of both sexes and all ages and the Council announced that they must be strong enough to undertake the work, otherwise the road-surveyors had the power to send them back. If any planter failed to send his quota and it was proved that his slaves were physically fit he was required to make good the time that had been lost. The surveyors were authorized to move and rebuild houses which lay in the path of projected roads. The Council was to provide tools, and if bridges had to be built, the administrators were to send skilled workmen, if they were available, to take charge of operations. The surveyors were instructed to buy food for the slaves from local planters by means of chits which could be exchanged at the Company office at St. Denis. (4)

The levying of ordinary corvees, "par chaque tête d'esclave, qu'il s'agit d'un noir, d'une négresse, d'un négillon ou d'une négrite," was bitterly resented by the planters and in 1739 the Company issued new regulations. From 1 January, 1740, ordinary corvees were reduced to four days unpaid labour for each working slave, male or female, between the age of fourteen and sixty. The slaves were required to work two days on the roads and two days on Company building sites each year. The corvée was made general and all slave owners in the island were affected; even the priests were ordered to send slaves if they had more than sixteen on the land attached to the church. Each month a statement of the number of slaves required from individual planters was to be drawn up and notice of contributions was to be given well in advance. Receipts for corvees duties which had been fulfilled were to be given to planters who, when they wished to deposit coffee in the Company warehouse, or to buy goods, were required to present them to the chief storekeeper. Planters who failed to produce their quota of slaves were to be fined, the money being used for the hiring of other slaves. (5)

(1) Mémoire (1740) Note 55. p. 112.

(2) Ibid. p. 112.

(3) Ibid. p. 112-113.

(4) Ibid. p. 112.

(5) Ibid. Note XXXIII. p. 162-163, 171.

La Bourdonnais tried to remedy the shortage of labour and materials by recourse to extraordinary corvées. He considered that the discount on the repayment of loans to the Company justified the imposition of this kind of tax and in 1735 he demanded an extraordinary corvée which was assessed in timber. In the same year, however, a deputation of colonists persuaded him to abolish this measure in return for an extraordinary corvée for general building purposes at the rate of one days unpaid labour for every twenty slaves on a plantation, male and female alike, between the age of fourteen and thirty five. This regulation was to remain in force until December, 1736, but in August of that year La Bourdonnais extended it for a further twelve months. In January and February, 1737 there were two cyclones in Bourbon and the Superior Council decided to suspend extraordinary corvées, although they made it clear that they were still legal. This statement was inserted in the orders which were issued after the cyclones because many of the planters had failed to contribute their quota of slaves in the previous year and the councillors intended to claim these unfulfilled duties when the emergency had ended. The colonists, however, had no intention of fulfilling their obligations and later in the year a group of 62 planters presented a petition to the directors in Paris: *Mémoire des vols et concussions exercés sur les pauvres sujets de S.M. très chrétienne le Roi de France, les habitants de l'Île de Bourbon, par les srs. de La Bourdonnais... et d'Héguerty, procureur du roi au Conseil Supérieur?* (1)

The directors sympathised with the colonists and pointed out to the Superior Council that extraordinary corvées in Bourbon were far too heavy. In February, 1739, they expressed the opinion that ordinary corvées should be sufficient for the needs of the Company. "Il est bon," they wrote, "qu'elles ne subsistent plus et que vous ayez fait rendre aux habitants leurs noirs." La Bourdonnais, however, explained that extraordinary corvées were essential for the development and maintenance of public works (Despatch of 20 November, 1739) and in 1741 the Company agreed to re-impose extraordinary corvées, although the colonists were allowed to commute these labour services for a payment of 10 sous per slave per day. (2)

It is therefore not surprising that very little was achieved during La Bourdonnais' first tour of duty. By 1740, however, a road from St. Denis to Ste. Suzanne was almost complete and work was in progress on a road from St. Paul to Rivière d'Abord. Much remained to be done and in the report of 1740 La Bourdonnais warned Orry that Bourbon would not have a satisfactory road system for many years to come. "Ne croyez pas," he wrote, "...que les chemins soient un ouvrage prêt à finir, il s'en faut bien: c'est encore un travail de 15 années à 200 noirs pour avoir dans les Îles tous les chemins qui sont nécessaires à la commodité publique!" (3)

It became increasingly clear to La Bourdonnais that any improvement in the internal communications in Bourbon could not be effected by any scheme of joint action between Company and colonists which involved statute labour. By 1742 it appears that many of the colonists refused to contribute slaves either for ordinary or extraordinary corvées. In July 1738 a planter named Philippe d'Achéry was imprisoned for thirty days by order of the Superior Council for refusing to contribute his quota of slaves for statute labour. Shortly afterwards he visited France and obtained a special writ from the Conseil Privé du Roi and when he returned to Bourbon in 1742 he not only refused to comply with the regulations but he also claimed damages against the Superior Council on the grounds that all corvées were illegal. Finally the administrators were forced to ask the Company to issue a special decree but it was not

(1) *Mémoire* (1740) Note 37. p. 118-119.

(2) *Ibid.* p. 119-120; Loughon. *Correspondance*. vol III. The Company to the Superior Council of Bourbon. 25 March, 1741. p. 162-163.

(3) *Ibid.* p. 13-14; Note XVI. p. 112-116.

until 1750 that the directors announced that the ordinary corvée would henceforth be exacted at the rate of 2 days free labour for every slave possessed. (1)

La Bourdonnais called an assembly of the leading planters in Bourbon in 1742 and proposed that the roads should be maintained by the unofficial association of slave owners known as the commune. Originally the commune served as a private insurance scheme and all slave owners paid a yearly premium based on the number of slaves owned. The money was deposited in a central fund and it was used to compensate masters whose slaves had turned maroon and had either been shot in the forests or captured and executed by order of the Council. The financial obligations of the commune had steadily increased; it paid a reward of 30 livres for each dead maroon and it assumed responsibility for the corvées of the priests and the payment of missionaries' salaries. Each year the planters chose representatives for the annual meeting at which a financial report was read and the various items of expenditure were discussed. (2)

The planters discussed the new scheme with La Bourdonnais and finally they agreed that the commune should assume responsibility for the upkeep and extension of the roads of Bourbon and, in addition, that it would build and maintain a road-repairing station with a permanent labour force of 120 slaves. An inspector-general of roads and bridges was appointed and paid by the commune. The budget of the association increased considerably and in 1745 the Company ordered the colonists to elect syndics who would work with the councillors and audit the annual accounts. The directors intended to limit Company participation in the scheme to an annual payment representing the number of slaves owned by the Company in Bourbon. The financial resources of the commune, however, were inadequate and the Company was constantly called upon to subsidize the association. When Bourbon was transferred to the Crown in 1767 these loans exceeded 300,000 livres. (3)

In Ile de France the paths between Port Louis and Moka and from Port Louis to Pamplémousses were widened and a road was built linking Grande Rivière and the port. The regulations governing ordinary and extraordinary corvées were presumably in operation in the island but it is probable that the Governor preferred to use Company slave gangs for construction work in the port and for the building of roads. The island was poor and undeveloped, the number of slave-owning planters was small and therefore the corvées which the Governor could legally have claimed were totally insufficient for the needs of the island. In 1740 La Bourdonnais gave instructions to the Acting-Governor, Bidier de St. Martin, to use slaves sent out by the Company for road building in order to lighten the burden of corvées on the planters. "J'ai chargé M. de St. Martin," he wrote, "...au cas qu'il vint des noirs pour la Compagnie de les employer à cet ouvrage, tant pour soulager les habitants que pour les dédommager des corvées extraordinaires qu'ils nous ont fournis pour les travaux de la Compagnie." (4)

La Bourdonnais introduced new methods of transport in Bourbon as an alternative to slave labour and in 1736 he formed a team of carriers with 30 oxen and horses to convey goods from St. Pierre to St. Paul. In the following year the scheme was abandoned owing to the difficulty of finding regular supplies of feeding stuffs. Later and draught oxen were brought from Ile de France where transport facilities appear to have been more highly developed and in 1740 La Bourdonnais wrote in the report to Orry: "On a vit pour la première fois avec étonnement rouler à Bourbon des machines dont les créoles avaient jusques là ignore l'usage et l'invention." (5)

(1) Loughon. Correspondance. Vol V. Introduction. p. XL-XLI.

(2) Memoire (1740) Note 131. p. 192-193.

(3) Ibid. p. 193.

(4) Ibid. p. 14.

(5) Ibid. p. 14. This statement has been challenged by historians in Réunion.

II. Public Works : Building Operations in Bourbon.

In 1727 the headquarters of the French East India Company in Bourbon was situated at St. Paul. Most of the buildings in the settlement were constructed of wood and the only stone buildings were a powder magazine, a bakery with two furnaces, a small guardroom and a warehouse which contained the Company office and quarters for the chief store-keeper. No provision had been made for a hospital and the Company had not authorized the Council to begin work on a house for the Governor. In 1721 de Nyon (Governor of the Isles, 1721-1725) visited the island whilst proceeding to Ile de France and in the same year he submitted a report on the existing buildings together with a series of recommendations for strengthening the settlement at St. Paul but the directors did not approve of the plans. In 1726 Lenoir, the Governor of Pondicherry, who was visiting Bourbon in order to set up a Superior Council, submitted another plan for the construction of a fortified trading post. At this time, however, the directors wished to devote all available capital and manpower on the development of the N.W. Port in Ile de France. Nevertheless, the Superior Council was instructed to build some stone houses and in 1726 the Company sent 50,000 slates to Bourbon to be used instead of thatch and, in addition, the administrators were authorized to construct gun-emplacements. (1)

Unfortunately there were very few skilled workmen in Bourbon. The Council had a small group of European workmen, a number of slave-gangs, and the administrators could call on the colonists to provide ordinary and extraordinary corvées. The slaves, however, were totally unsuited to skilled labour. The Company sent a few masons and lime-burners to Bourbon and the administrators encouraged these men to take slaves as apprentices, offering them another slave in payment if their training bore results. But the experiment failed; artisans from Europe were normally of poor quality and there was much drunkenness in the settlement; moreover, it was impossible for an illiterate European workman for whom slavery was a new and demoralising experience to take a slave as a pupil. (2)

In 1728 Dumas (Governor of the Isles, 1727-1735) engaged 95 Indian workers at 3 pagodas a month, together with food, and work was begun on a stone warehouse in St. Denis. But there was still a shortage of Company workmen and the Indians were usually needed for repair work or for cutting and dressing wood for naval supplies and therefore progress was very slow. (3) The Company sent a number of cannons, probably in 1728, but stone emplacements were not built and in 1730 the cannons lay rusting on the shore. Shortly afterwards the guns were taken to India and as late as 1732 it was understood that warning of a slave revolt would have to be given by means of bells. In this year, however, a number of gun-emplacements were finally built. In 1731 the Council built two stone houses, one at St. Paul and one at St. Denis, but the Company was so short of accommodation for its employees that the administrators purchased several houses which had been constructed privately. One of them was equipped as a hospital. (4)

(1) Lougnon. Correspondance. Vol I. Introduction. p. XXXVIII-XXXIX.

(2) Ibid. p. XXXIX.

(3) Ibid. p. XL.

(4) Ibid. Vol II. Introduction. p. XXX.

Charpentier de Cossigny, who had been sent to make a survey of harbour facilities in the Isles, arrived in Bourbon in October, 1732. He inspected the Company buildings in St. Paul and recommended that the headquarters should be transferred to the Parc de Jacques, some distance away. The settlement had been built on the edge of a freshwater lake and Cossigny thought that the sandy soil would not support heavy stone buildings and that the settlement might easily be flooded. He therefore drew up plans for a new fortified trading post on the landward side of the lake. The Council had already begun work on a stone warehouse in St. Paul but Cossigny was unwilling to complete it since he believed that the foundations were inadequate. He left Bourbon in January, 1733, and visited Madagascar. On his return to Bourbon in March of the same year he agreed to complete the warehouse in St. Paul but he insisted on commencing work on the new trading post at Parc de Jacques, where he constructed a stone base for a windmill. (1) In May, 1733, he quarrelled with Dumas and during the next twelve months he refused to cooperate with the Council. (2) From 1734-1735 the Superior Council of Bourbon completed the warehouse at St. Paul, equipped a building with beds to serve as a hospital and built a number of gun-mounts in the town. A warehouse was also built at St. Denis.

The directors ordered La Bourdonnais to build gun-emplacements and warehouses at St. Paul and St. Denis, to reorganise the hospital buildings and to construct sleeping quarters for the Company slave-gangs in the various districts where they were working. (3) Cossigny's stay in Bourbon had proved very expensive and La Bourdonnais was instructed to cut down building operations to a minimum. The councillors in Bourbon, however, had plans to make St. Denis the seat of the Company since it was more conveniently placed for receiving ships from Ile de France and had good natural defences. Gun-emplacements were therefore built in 1735-1736 in St. Denis and although La Bourdonnais intended to set up a battery at St. Paul, the Superior Council, in August 1736, stopped all further building in that town and went forward with their plans in St. Denis. In March, 1741, St. Denis became the capital of Bourbon and the Council transferred their headquarters from St. Paul. The new factory was completed by about 1742. It contained a house for the Governor and for the Commander of the garrison, offices and shops, a number of warehouses, barracks and workshops. The factory was defended by three batteries and a small fort. (4) Two years later the Council was instructed to suspend all further building operations.

The Governor built a floating dock in St. Denis. In 1735 he installed a large raft, attached to the shore by means of a cable and in 1737 he secured the raft with chains. (5) The chains were found to be inadequate and therefore La Bourdonnais asked the Company to send stronger chains which appear to have arrived in St. Denis in 1738. In the report to Orry in 1740 La Bourdonnais described his 'pont volant': "lequel saille sur la mer de 150 pieds et est soutenu par une mâture quil'est elle-même par de bonnes chaines qui rendent cette machine si solide qu'elle n'a été nullement ébranlée dans les deux derniers ouragans qui ont passé, ce qui rend la descente à St. Denis aussi sûre à present qu'elle avait été jusques la dangereuse et difficile." (6)

(1) Loughon. Correspondance. vol II. Introduction. p. XXX; Mémoire (1740) p. 136-7.

(2) Crépin. Cossigny. p. II-12.

(3) Loughon. Correspondance. Vol II. The Company to the Superior Council of Bourbon. 11 October, 1734. p. 231, The Superior Council of Bourbon to the Company 12 August, 1735. p. 280.

(4) Mémoire. (1740) p. 35, Note 85. p. 142.

(5) Loughon. Correspondance. Vol II. The Superior Council of Bourbon to the Company. 12 August, 1735. p. 281.

(6) Mémoire (1740) p. 31. Note 74. p. 135-136. The 'pont volant' existed until 1760. It is described by Grant in the History of Mauritius. p. 160.

III. Agriculture : Coffee Growing in Bourbon.

Until 1715 Bourbon was regarded solely as a revictualing centre for Company ships on their way to and from India but in that year coffee plants from Moka in Arabia were imported into the island. Moreover, a native coffee bush was found growing locally. Arabian coffee had first been introduced into France in 1660 and it immediately became very popular. During the last quarter of the seventeenth century and the first decade of the eighteenth century beans from the Yemen were carried to Eastern Mediterranean ports where the cargoes were transferred, usually to Dutch vessels, and taken to Marseilles. Arabian coffee was regarded as a luxury and its price was high. At that time most of the coffee drunk in France was purchased in Surat from the Dutch Company. During the early years of the eighteenth century the French East India Company tried to buy coffee direct from the growers in Arabia but they failed and it was not until 1709 that the Société Maritime de St. Malo succeeded in opening trade relations with Moka. A few years later coffee plants and cuttings were obtained for the Company settlements abroad. The directors had recommended coffee as a suitable cash crop for Bourbon as early as 1711 and in December, 1715, the administrators ordered all colonists in the island to grow trial crops on their plantations. (1)

In 1717 the first samples of Bourbon coffee were sent to France and in the following year they were examined by a committee of the directors of the Company, presided over by the Farmer-General. The committee decided that the coffee had a commercial value and the administrators in Bourbon were advised to encourage the colonists to concentrate wholly on coffee growing. By 1719 about a quarter of the plants from Moka had taken hold and in 1723 the area under coffee had considerably increased. Progress, however, was slow. The directors hoped for quick returns but the coffee plants took several years to establish themselves and large numbers of bushes died when they were transplanted. Moreover, the planters were conservative and they waited to see whether the crop would be a success before embarking on large-scale production. (2)

The Director-General of Bourbon, Desforges-Boucher (1723-1725), believed that the colonists were to blame for the slow rate of progress and in December, 1724, he persuaded the Council to issue an order threatening to confiscate the estates of those planters who had not yet planted coffee. At the same time he gave warning that the Council would demand the death penalty for the crime of destroying young coffee bushes. The Company, however, forbade the introduction of the death penalty and criticised the administrators for failing to introduce sound measures to increase coffee production. In 1725 the directors asked one of the most capable of their officials, Pierre Lenoir, who was visiting Bourbon in order to set up a Superior Council, to write a report on coffee growing. Lenoir spent a month in Bourbon in 1726 and he reported that a substantial crop should be available for export in 1728 and 1729. In May, 1727, the directors received his report and in the same month a cargo of 22,800 lbs. of Bourbon coffee arrived in France. (3)

When Bourbon was first colonised there were few planters, land was plentiful and generous grants were made to any colonist who offered to clear it and grow food. The only condition of tenure was the payment of

(1) Guet. Bourbon. p. 251-255, 261; Recueil Trimestriel. Mémoire sur l'île

Bourbon adressé par la Compagnie. au Gouverneur Parat. 1711. Vol V. p. 186-276.

(2) Ibid. p. 252-255.

(3) Loughon. Correspondance. Vol I. Introduction. p. XII-XIV.

a small rent in kind; in a census made in St. Paul which had 1,216 inhabitants in 1719, the 'état de rédevances' was 750 lbs. of corn, 180 fowls, 810 lbs. of rice, 2 goats and 5 lbs. of wax. (1) The early contracts between the Company and the colonists were normally vague and unexacting but after 1715 the conditions became rather more onerous. The new contracts stated that if the land was not producing at the end of two to three years it could be re-annexed to the Company demesne. The development of a cash crop and the subsequent rise in land values in Bourbon caused the directors to introduce a uniform payment in kind and in 1727 the Company fixed a feudal rent of 4 oz. of coffee for each acre under cultivation. The Superior Council, however, was slow to register this cultivated land and in 1730 the Company threatened to send out a commission to survey the island and to confiscate all land which was inefficiently farmed. Paradis, a senior official in Pondicherry, actually received orders to carry out the survey but he does not appear to have visited the island. In fact the surface features were very irregular and the Council lacked both the equipment and the personnel to carry out a comprehensive survey. (2)

Coffee production expanded rapidly after 1727. Dumas, who was Governor of the Isles in this year, was very optimistic regarding the future and in a despatch to the directors he wrote: "Rien de plus admirable que les plantations de café qui multiplient à l'infini... Cette île sera dans peu capable d'en fournir au delà de la consommation de tout le royaume... quelle différence de porter son argent aux Arabes, comme on l'a fait jusqu'à présent au de tirer le café directement de chez soi." (3) His confidence in the future of the island appears to have been justified because in 1723 the French East India had been given the exclusive right to import and sell coffee in France.

Progress in Bourbon, however, was not maintained. A series of disasters in 1729-1731 almost brought the colony to a standstill. In 1729 a smallpox epidemic, introduced by Indian labourers, caused the death of 800 people in one parish alone and probably some 1,200 persons died during the epidemic, the majority of them slaves. Swarms of locusts ate the food crops and cyclones struck the island in two successive years. Colonists who had lost their slaves and their crops were compelled to apply to the administrators for further loans. From 1727-1731 the island exported over 1,250,000 lbs. of coffee and the colonists received as payment 557,000 livres from the Company, but in the same period they appear to have borrowed more than twice this amount. Thus the increase in coffee production depended ultimately on the willingness of the Company to lend money to the colonists. (4)

From the very first the Company experienced considerable difficulty in finding a market for Bourbon coffee. In the early years great care was taken in drying, packing and transporting the beans but the quality was poor. After 1725 the Company refused to buy the native coffee and the colonists were instructed to grow only Arabian coffee. The directors, who expected the quality to improve, decided that it would be unwise to attempt to sell the coffee in France where it would get a bad reputation and an alternative market was found in Holland and Hamburg. The profits, however, were very low and in 1730 the directors lowered the purchase price of Bourbon coffee from 8 to 6 sous a pound. (5)

The decision of the Company to lower the purchase price caused a storm of protest in Bourbon. The colonists decided to send a deputation to France and in 1731 three planters presented a petition to the directors of the Company. As a result of the discussions in Paris the

(1) Guet. Bourbon. p. 275.

(2) Loughnon. Correspondance. Vol II. Introduction. p. XIV-XV.

(3) Guet. Bourbon. Dumas to the Company. 5 April, 1728. p. 296-297.

(4) Loughnon. Correspondance. Vol II. Introduction. p. XVIII.

(5) Ibid. Vol I. Introduction. p. XXV-XXVI.

directors agreed to pay 8 sous per lb. for coffee until 31 July, 1732, and the administrators in Bourbon were advised to accept coffee at the old price. The planters, however, were required to pay a freight charge of 2lbs. per 100lbs. of coffee shipped to France, a money payment of 1 denier per acre and a corvée of 2 days unpaid labour each year for all privately owned slaves over the age of fifteen. The directors promised to abolish all additional rents in kind and to impose a uniform rent of 4oz. of coffee per acre under cultivation. (1)

The planters were thankful to have found a crop that could withstand cyclones and insect pests and they continued to devote more of their land to coffee growing. The population grew rapidly owing to the successful development of a cash crop; in 1710 there were about 1,300 colonists and slaves in the island; in 1732 there were 7500 and three years later the total population had reached 9,500. The acreage under coffee increased considerably and from 1732-1735 the island produced over 2,250,000 lbs. (2) But the quality of the coffee did not improve. Slave labour was inefficient and it was very difficult to train slaves to pick only the ripe berries. Moreover, once the berries were gathered they were spread out on the ground to dry. The average planter did not possess sufficient capital to build a concrete drying-platform and since the island had a damp climate the beans deteriorated rapidly. Unfortunately Company ships were forced to collect the crop during the rainy season when they returned from India on the N.E. Monsoon. Berries which had been picked in December and January were imperfectly dried and added to the dry berries which had been picked in the previous July. Coffee which was collected by ships of the 'seconde navigation' and transhipped in Ile de France was frequently spoiled. In 1731 the administrators in Ile de France informed the Superior Council in Bourbon: "Il s'en perd toujours considérablement dans les chargements et les déchargements, les sacs étant mal cousus ou percés." (3) The Company encouraged the administrators to experiment with new methods of drying and packing the berries in order to improve the quality of the coffee. However it is doubtful whether the Company would have found a steady market in France even if an improvement had been effected, since those who could afford to buy it preferred Moka coffee.

By 1735 when La Bourdonnais arrived in the isles the economy of Bourbon was endangered by the overproduction of inferior coffee. The new Governor realised that although the problems of over-production and quality were closely connected, an improvement in the quality of Bourbon coffee could only be effected after many years of experiment and supervision. As a long-term policy he encouraged the planters to try new methods of curing and packing the beans but he was well aware of the fact that immediate remedies were needed to strengthen the economy of Bourbon. The problem was tackled in two ways. Firstly, La Bourdonnais believed that alternative markets could be found in the Middle East and in India and he tried to establish trade relations with these two areas. Secondly, he pointed out the dangers of a one-crop economy and attempted to persuade the colonists to grow other cash crops such as indigo, cotton, tobacco and Turkey rhubarb.

La Bourdonnais searched for alternative markets in India and in countries bordering the Red Sea and the Persian Gulf. In 1735 he arranged for the export of 83,000 lbs. of coffee aboard the Prince de Conti and the Duc de Bourbon to the French factories at Pondicherry and Chandanagore. In the same year another cargo of 10,000lbs. was sent to India aboard the Subtile; La Bourdonnais hoped that this coffee could be sold in the towns along the Malabar Coast. In 1736 he sent 100,000lbs of coffee on the Subtile to ports in the Persian Gulf and over 28,000lbs.

(1) Lougnon. Correspondance. Vol II. Introduction. p. XVIII-XIX; The Superior Council of Bourbon to the Company. 15 October, 1731. p. 22-26.

(2) Ibid. p. XXVIII; Guet. Bourbon. p. 230.

(3) Ibid. p. XXII-XXIII; Recueil Trimestriel. Vol VII. Correspondance des Administrateurs. The Provincial Council of Ile de France to the Superior Council of Bourbon. 23 November, 1731. p. 116.

of coffee on the Jupiter to the French factories in India. (1)

The administrators in Pondicherry, Chandanagore and Mahe, were hard pressed to find a market for the coffee once it arrived in India. The cargoes which were disembarked at Pondicherry could not be sold and although 40,000lbs of coffee was re-exported to Mahe the authorities there were only able to sell a few thousand pounds to Portuguese merchants from Goa. The cargoes which had been stored in warehouses in Chandanagore remained unsold; and in Bengal, the Indians preferred Arabian coffee. The Council of Chandanagore sent some of the coffee they had received from the sales on special ships to Patna, Djeddah and Basra in the Persian Gulf, in the hope of finding a market for it. A small amount was sold in Calcutta but at a very low price. (2)

After 1736 the French East India Company was faced with serious competition from coffee producers in the West Indies. Planters in Martinique petitioned the king to allow them to sell their coffee in France and in 1732 they were given permission to land the coffee in certain French ports, provided that it was re-exported for sale abroad. In 1736, however, the French East India Company lost its monopoly of importing coffee into France and after this date about 4,000,000lbs. per annum. entered France from the West Indies. At this time the total consumption in France did not amount to more than 1,000,000lbs. per annum. and therefore alternative markets had to be found in Turkey and the Levant, Holland and the German States. The wholesale price of Bourbon coffee in France sank to 12 sous per lb. (3)

Although the news from India was disappointing, La Bourdonnais continued to search for alternative markets and he concentrated his efforts on the Persian Gulf and the Red Sea where sales had been somewhat more encouraging. The coffee had sold fairly well at Djeddah but freight charges were high and no profit had been made. It was hoped, however, that freight charges would be reduced and the captain of the Subtile reported that Persia could absorb the entire crop of Bourbon. Commercial relations were established with the Shah through the agency of the French consul in Basra and in 1738 160,000lbs. of coffee were sent to Djeddah. Nevertheless it seems that a high proportion of the cargo remained unsold. (4)

La Bourdonnais' efforts to establish a Middle Eastern market were hampered by an acute shortage of ships in the Isles and by the antagonism of the Council of Pondicherry. The ships in the island command were needed for transporting slaves, oxen and rice and therefore La Bourdonnais did not have a sufficient number of vessels to organise a regular trade in coffee. Furthermore, the Council of Pondicherry felt that if La Bourdonnais were allowed to make commercial treaties with Eastern powers without reference to Pondicherry it would endanger the prestige of the Council in India. They complained to the Company and in 1737 the directors ordered La Bourdonnais to limit his trading activities to East Africa, the Comores and Madagascar. In future all shipments of coffee were to be sent to Pondicherry, Mahe or Chandanagore and re-exported to Djeddah or Basrah. (5)

In 1737 40,000lbs of Bourbon coffee was shipped from Mahe to Basra but the French consul was unable to dispose of it. In the following year La Bourdonnais sent 100,000lbs. to Pondicherry on the Paix; part of the cargo was sent to Bengal and from there re-exported to Basra; the rest was sent to France in 1740. In the following year 30,000lbs. was shipped to Basra but when the ships reached the port it was found that the consul was dead and there was apparently nobody in the town able to negotiate with local merchants. It is likely that the coffee remained unsold. (6)

(1) Loughon. Correspondance. Vol III. The Superior Council of Bourbon to the Company. 25 September, 1736. p. 48-49.

(2) Ibid. Introduction. p. XIV-XV.

(3) Ibid. p. XX; Recueil Trimestriel. Vol II. p. 130.

(4) Ibid. Vol III. p. XIV-XV.

(5) Ibid. p. XV-XVI.

(6) Ibid. The Company to the Superior Council of Bourbon. 17 Feb. 1738. p. 118.

In 1738 the purchase price for Bourbon coffee dropped from 6 to 5 sous per lb. and in the following year the directors informed La Bourdonnais that they could not continue to buy coffee even at this low price. The coffee was sold in France at 12 sous per lb. but when the Company had paid freightage and insurance and disposed of the coffee, which had often further deteriorated on the long voyage to Europe, the margin of profit was negligible. La Bourdonnais, however, managed to persuade the Company to buy the crops for the next three years at 5 sous per lb. (1)

La Bourdonnais returned to France in 1740. His search for a new market for the coffee crop had proved unsuccessful and alternative cash crops had not been developed but he believed that a free-trade policy for the two islands would help to solve the problem of over-production by placing responsibility for the disposal of the crop on the shoulders of the planters. In addition, an alternative source of wealth would be created if the colonists built ships and engaged in inter-ocean commerce. He tried to persuade the directors that the Company trade monopoly was harmful to their interests and finally they agreed to introduce free-trade although they were more interested in escaping their seigneurial obligations rather than in benefitting the Isles. Colonists in Ile de France and Bourbon were given permission to trade with India, Madagascar, East Africa and France from 1 January, 1742, to 31 December, 1747. The introduction of free-trade, however, was not destined to produce the desired results. The planters did not have the necessary contacts in Europe and India, shipping facilities in the Isles were inadequate and the planters lacked the necessary capital for building up even a small merchant fleet.

Meanwhile coffee production continued to rise; in 1740 it exceeded 2,000,000 lbs. and in 1744 it reached 2,500,000 lbs. In 1742 and again in 1743 the directors stated that they were not prepared to buy more than 1,500,000 to 1,800,000 lbs. per annum. The planters were thus faced with a difficult choice; they could either continue to grow coffee and make private arrangements to dispose of it themselves or they could reduce the acreage under coffee on their plantations and grow other crops. (2) Nevertheless it seems probable that La Bourdonnais allowed the administrators in Bourbon to accept the total coffee output of the island in the Company warehouses during the period of free-trade. The Company, however, continued to lower the purchase price; in 1744 coffee was bought at 4 sous per lb. and in 1745 at 3 sous per lb. In spite of all, the situation remained the same; the planters persisted in growing coffee and La Bourdonnais continued to send surplus crops to India to be re-exported to the Persian Gulf. But when the price of Moka coffee in Basra fell in 1743 and again in 1744 even this market dried up and a cargo of Bourbon coffee which arrived in the port in 1744 remained unsold. (3)

In April, 1745, the Company announced that it was prepared to take as much as 3,000,000 lbs. of coffee per annum in a system of priorities; firstly, coffee sent by debtors; secondly, coffee sent privately on the Company ships by local merchants or planters; thirdly, all other coffee grown in the island. In the following year, however, the Council of State cancelled the concession granted to the West Indian planters to sell coffee in France and re-granted the monopoly to the East India Company. At this time coffee output in Bourbon was declining owing to a blight but during the next twenty years conditions improved. The price of coffee steadily increased and by 1771 planters were being paid 10 sous per lb. (4)

(1) Recueil Trimestriel. Vol I. Motifs sur lesquels la Compagnie fonde la destruction du traité fait ... entre elle et les habitants députés de l'île Bourbon. p. 338-342; Lougnon. Correspondance. Vol III. Introduction. p. XIX.

(2) Lougnon. Correspondance. Vol IV. Introduction. p. XVI.

(3) Ibid. p. XI; Recueil Trimestriel. Vol II. p. 146.

(4) Ibid. Vol V. Introduction. p. XIV-XVII; Recueil Trimestriel. Vol II. p. 146-47.

La Bourdonnais tried to convince the planters in Bourbon of the need to develop alternative cash crops. Tobacco, indigo, cinnamon, Turkey rhubarb, vines, cotton, tea, jute and other plants had been introduced into the island during the seventeenth century but none of them had so far proved worth while, and once the planters realised the advantages of growing coffee these crops were almost entirely neglected. La Bourdonnais, however, believed that the island could produce a rich variety of crops owing to the diversity of soil and climate and during his term as Governor he paid special attention to the development of indigo, tobacco and cotton crops. (1)

The directors of the Company were very interested in developing the cultivation of indigo in Bourbon. Not all parts of the island were suitable for this crop as it needed a high rainfall. The parish of Ste. Suzanne seemed to be the likeliest place. Indigo plants, however, required careful cultivation and constant supervision and large numbers of slaves were needed. In 1734 the directors informed the Superior Council that planters who wished to grow indigo on a large scale would qualify for a loan of 15,000 livres payable in slaves. (2) Many of the colonists who were heavily in debt and who required additional slaves obtained the loan but failed to grow any indigo. The directors therefore restricted the credit in slaves to those planters who had cleared all their debts. In 1741 the scheme was abandoned.

The Company fixed the price of indigo at 25 sous per lb. in 1736. Indigo was an expensive crop to cultivate and the planters found that this price was far too low. The directors, although they refused to increase the purchase price, continued their efforts to stimulate production and in 1738 they sent two slaves who understood the cultivation and preparation of Indigo from St. Dominique to Ile de France. It was expected that the slaves would train a group of Company slaves and that the colonists would be tempted to grow the crop. But the experiment failed; a planter in Ile de France signed a contract to grow indigo but he was not successful; one of the slaves turned maroon and the other slave was sent to Bourbon. In the report of 1740 La Bourdonnais advised the Company to increase the price paid for indigo and in 1741 the Company agreed to pay 36 sous per lb. The increase in price appears to have encouraged some planters to grow the crop because samples were sent to France in 1743 and again in 1744. Most of the experiments appear to have failed, however, and indigo was never a successful crop either in Ile de France or Bourbon. (3)

La Bourdonnais also encouraged planters in Bourbon to grow tobacco and cotton. Tobacco had been introduced into Bourbon in the middle of the seventeenth century and in 1735 the island probably produced sufficient for its own needs. Efforts were made to improve the quality during La Bourdonnais' first tour and samples were sent to France. But the tobacco was very poor and it never became an important cash crop. (4) Cotton growing was rather more successful and it appears that a large amount was grown in the Riviere d'Abord district but the purchase prices offered by the Company were wholly inadequate: in 1735, 3 sous per lb. for ginned cotton and 1 sou per lb. for raw cotton. At this time the Company agents in Bourbon despaired of developing a cotton crop. "Il est inutile," they wrote to the Council of Pondicherry, in 1735, "de penser que l'habitant veuille et puisse même donner le coton écale aux prix que vous nous le mandez. Il n'y a en cette île ni métier ni moulins propre à en separer la graine. Il faudrait qu'il le fit faire à la main, ce qui serait... un ouvrage si long que quand bien même il ne s'occuperait qu'à ce seul article, l'avantage qu'il pourrait en retirer ne suffirait assurément pas pour la nourriture et vêtements des esclaves." (5)

(1) Mémoire (1740) p. 12.
 (2) Loughon. Correspondance. Vol II. Introduction. p. XXV, Vol III. Introduction p. XVII-avIII; Recueil Trimestriel. Vol II. p. 373-380.
 (3) Loughon. Correspondance. Vol III. Introduction. p. XVIII, Vol IV. Introduction p. XVII-XIX; Mémoire (1740) p. 67.
 (4) Ibid. Vol III. The Company to the S. Council of Bourbon. 25 March, 1741. p. 189.
 (5) Ibid. Vol III. Introduction. p. XVI; Recueil Trimestriel. Vol III. p. 238-239.

La Bourdonnais persuaded the directors to increase the price paid for cotton and in 1738 planters were paid 4 sous per lb. for ginned cotton and three years later the price rose to 5 sous per lb. Three planters in Bourbon appear to have owned large cotton plantations and in 1743 one of them persuaded the Council of Pondicherry to send a party of spinners and weavers to the island but on arrival they refused to work. Production, however, did improve and in 1770 Bourbon was exporting about 100,000 lbs. of raw cotton each year to India. (1)

During the governorship of La Bourdonnais the planters in Bourbon were encouraged to improve methods of curing and packing coffee beans. That higher prices for Bourbon coffee could be obtained by careful handling of the beans was proved in 1737 when a small experimental crop, grown and cured by the Director of Commerce in Bourbon, sold for 17-18 sous per lb. in France. At this time the normal price for Bourbon coffee was 11-12 sous per lb. In 1734 the Company had asked the administrators to experiment with wooden platforms for drying the beans and to determine whether coffee dried in the sun was of better quality than that dried in the shade. La Bourdonnais favoured concrete platforms and in 1736 he organised a private Company to construct such platforms but the venture was not successful and in 1739 his partner was expelled from Bourbon. In 1739 he promoted another Company to construct concrete platforms with a labour force of 105 slaves and a number of workmen who had been recruited in India. Several platforms appear to have been built. La Bourdonnais also appointed a curing-expert and a staff of workmen to supervise the drying of the beans but the quality of the coffee was not noticeably improved. (2)

- (1) Lougnon, Correspondance. Vol III. Introduction. p. XVII-XVIII; Vol IV. Extrait du Régistre-général, 11 April, 1744. p. 155; Vol V. Introduction. p. XVI-XVIII.
- (2) Mémoire (1740) p. 12, Note. XV. p. 110-111.

III. Agriculture: Cash Crops in Ile de France.

When Ile de France was first colonised by the French the administrators informed the Company that both soil and climate were favourable for the development of a wide variety of cash crops. The number of planters began to increase after 1727 and the Company recommended the cultivation of coffee, pepper, Turkey rhubarb and sugar. (1) The early experiments in growing cash crops on a large scale were unsuccessful owing to the shortage of labour and the difficulty of clearing the rocky ground. After 1733 the directors regarded Ile de France primarily as a refitting and revictualling centre and therefore they advised the administrators to concentrate on food production rather than cash crops. They sent all manner of livestock, fruit trees, cereals and root crops to the island but they felt that the development of one all important cash crop would not be in the best interests of the Company. They were afraid that the planters would neglect food production and that the Company would be called upon to invest an inordinate amount of capital in the island during the trial period.

La Bourdonnais, however, decided that sugar cane was particularly suited to the soil and climate of Ile de France. It could resist the local animal and insect pests; it was well suited to a slave economy; above all, it had proved itself able to survive severe climatic conditions. The Dutch had introduced cuttings from Batavia as early as 1650 and although the crop failed another attempt was made in 1680 when all the freemen in the colony were ordered to plant sugar. The assistant surgeon in Mauritius had learnt how to prepare sugar in Surinam and a sugar mill was built during the sixteenth eighties. Samples were sent to Amsterdam and the Cape but the area under cultivation probably never exceeded four or five acres during the Dutch occupation. When the Dutch left the island they destroyed the plantations and the sugar mill at Flacq. (2)

La Bourdonnais is usually given the credit for introducing sugar cane into Ile de France but in fact cane which had been introduced by the Dutch was probably growing wild in the island during the early part of the French occupation and cuttings may well have been sent from Bourbon. Sugar was grown in Bourbon in the early eighteenth century and most planters seem to have had a sugar patch on their land for making frangorin, or sugar wine. (3) It is, however, beyond doubt that La Bourdonnais gave an impetus to the growing of cane and the extraction of sugar. Oddly enough the report of 1740 does not contain any reference to sugar production. There are three possible explanations for this omission. Firstly, it appears that he had a large stake in the early factories and did not wish to publicise the fact; secondly, in 1740 he was faced with a commission of enquiry and he was obviously unwilling to reveal the fact that he had disobeyed the orders of the Company regarding cash crops; thirdly, it may well be that the first canes to be grown on a commercial basis were planted during his second tour in 1743 or 1744.

It is clear, however, that by 1742 La Bourdonnais was planning to develop sugar production in Ile de France, since in this year he asked the

- (1) Loughon. Correspondance. Vol I. The Company to the Provincial Council of Ile de France. 30 July, 1728. p. 81.
- (2) North-Coombes. The first Hundred Years of the Mauritian Sugar Industry. Bulletin Annuel de la Societe de l'Histoire de l'ile Maurice. Vol I; See also. North-Coombes. The evolution of sugar cane culture in Mauritius.
- (3) Loughon. anciens Voyages. quoting R.P. Gaubil. S.J. Bourbon en 1721. p. 209.

Company to send special cauldrons for making brown sugar and if possible, a machine for refining the sugar. In April, 1744, the directors replied: "La Compagnie a marqué à ce Conseil qu'elle ne désirait rien tant que de voir les îles dans l'état d'opulence où il pense qu'elles doivent être en peu d'années par la réussite des différentes entreprises que M. La Bourdonnais...était sur le point de former...qu'elle les favoriserait en tout ce qui pourrait dépendre d'elle pourvu qu'elles ne lui occasionnent aucunes dépenses. Elle lui a d'ailleurs observé sur ce sujet qu'elle ne pensait pas que jamais le sucre ni le ris devinssent les objets de commerce avantageux." (1)

Certain technical improvements were developed from 1735-1745. The planters had used a wooden mortar and pestle, called a frangrine, for extracting juice from the cane, but during the governorship of La Bourdonnais many of them adopted instead the frangourinier. This was a heavy wooden table with a shallow gutter running round it; a heavy wooden roller was used to crush the cane and the juice flowed through openings in the centre of each narrow side of the table. It was then poured into a cauldron and then boiled. La Bourdonnais apparently imported more complicated machinery in order to increase the yield of juice from the cane. It is interesting to note that the St. Géran, which sank off Ile de France in 1744, was carrying cauldrons for boiling sugar and possibly crushing machines. A factory was built in the district of Pamplémousses at Villebague, (2) and another at L'Enfoncement des Hollandais in the district of Grand Port. (3)

After the departure of La Bourdonnais the factory at Pamplémousses was taken over by two ex-captains who had served in the Company fleet. In 1750 the island was supplying 60,000lbs. of sugar per annum. to the Company. Grant described the state of the industry in 1753 in one of his letters to his family in France. "They have established a handsome factory but it is so ill-conducted that the sugar has the appearance of Norman honey; it costs 2 sous a pound and is quite disgusting. The sugar is employed to cover houses in the Italian manner and being incorporated with chalk, forms a kind of mastich, and being spread on fine planks becomes as hard as pavement." (4)

Another observer, the English geographer, Dalrymple, who visited Ile de France about 1755 was impressed by the organisation of the sugar industry in the island. He stated that it produced enough to supply the needs of Ile de France and Bourbon and also visiting ships. "There are three different mills employed for pressing canes," he wrote, "one a windmill, another wrought by oxen and a third which is the most complicated and curious is turned by water!" (5) The acreage under sugar appears to have declined temporarily and a visitor in 1769 observed that the only sugar-growing district at that time was in Pamplémousses. (6) At the close of the eighteenth century sugar cane accounted for ten per cent of the area under crops, only eighteen per cent of the land of the colony being cultivated at that time. (7) The sugar was largely used for making wines and spirits; in 1772 there were 125 licensed drinking houses in Port Louis alone.

A major cane crop was not developed until the British occupation. This was partly due to the action of the French Company which paid low prices to the colonists and tried to dictate to them what they should grow. Moreover the planters had little capital and they had no technical knowledge. Commenting on this Grant wrote: "The inhabitants have wandered from project to project and endeavoured to cultivate every kind of plant but without persevering to secure success...Coffee, cotton, indigo, sugar, pepper, cinnamon, tea, mulberry, cocoa...have been cultivated in their turn but without that knowledge and attention that were necessary." (8)

(1) Loughon. Correspondance. Vol. IV. Extrait du Régistre. 11 April, 1744. p. 140.

(2) The manager was La Bourdonnais' cousin, Ribrétière de la Villebague.

(3) North-Coombes. The Evolution of Sugar Cane Culture in Mauritius. p. 113-14.

(4) Grant. History of Mauritius. Lett. 12. 15 August. 1753. (see Bibliography)

(5) Recueil Trimestriel Vol. I. L'île de France vers 1755.

(6) Wicklinsky. Voyages aux îles de France et de Bourbon. 1769-70.

(7) North-Coombes. p. 14. (8) Grant. History of Mauritius. p. 55.

III. Agriculture: Food Growing in the Isles.

In 1735 Bourbon and Ile de France imported a high proportion of food supplies from Europe, India and Madagascar. The planters in Bourbon devoted far too much of their land to coffee growing while agriculture in Ile de France was disorganised and the planters were barely able to feed themselves. There were a number of factors which contributed to this situation. The Councils of the two islands were responsible for feeding the clerks and workmen, the soldiers, the officers and men in the island squadron, the Company slaves and the crews of ships in the 'première navigation' which called at the islands. It was extremely difficult to feed these men, even when food was fairly plentiful, but when a cyclone struck the islands the crops were flattened by wind and rain, the livestock was decimated and the simple houses of the inhabitants blown down. The food supply then depended upon the success of hunting and fishing expeditions and the inhabitants were often reduced to starvation. Added to this was the problem of the depredations of rats, locusts, monkeys and wild deer.

De Maupin, who arrived in Ile de France in 1729, had been given instructions to speed up the development of the colony and to encourage the colonists to grow more food. On arrival he found the island: "dépourvue entièrement de farines, ris, mais, viande salée et autres choses... les habitants.... sont obligés de chercher leur vie dans les bois au bout du fusil, et cela sans chiens, parcequ'ils n'y en a dans les deux ports appartenant à la Compagnie que douze, que l'on fait chasser uniquement pour fournir de la viande aux vaisseaux." (1) In the previous year the supplies of salt beef, wine and brandy had been exhausted and the soldiers, "tous crier la faim et la soif," were allowed to hunt every day in the surrounding forests.

A cyclone struck the N.W. Port in 1727 and again in 1731. One of the administrators in Ile de France, Moret, described the effects of the cyclone of 1731. "O le bon pays que l'île de France où si l'on ne périt pas d'une façon il faut se résoudre péir de l'autre, je veux dire de famine! Tout le monde, blancs et noirs, sont dans les bois à vivre du gibier faute de ris: nos magasins sont absolument vides de tout; il nous reste pour tous vivres cinq quarts de farine que nous allons partager entre l'état major, les ouvriers qui restent et la troupe, de façon qu'en ne mangeant qu'une demi-livre de pain par jour nous pourrions attrayer le fin de mars." All the ships except one small pirogue had been destroyed—a dangerous situation when hunting and fishing were the sole means of providing food. (2)

In Bourbon the food situation was equally precarious. The population of the island in 1732 was 7,500 (2,000 free and 5,500 slaves) and yet the planters concentrated on the growing of coffee. The island therefore relied mainly on imports of rice and wheat from India. In July, 1732 the Superior Council wrote to the Council of Bengal: "Nous avons 300 personnes au moins à nourrir: soldats, ouvriers et noirs: la traite du ris à Madagascar est très peu de chose: les sauterelles mangent tous nos plantages: ainsi le secours de l'Inde nous est indispensable." (3) Locusts appear to have been a very serious problem in Bourbon. In October, 1731, the Council informed the directors: "il y a quatre ou cinq mois de l'année

(1) Recueil Trimestriel. Vol VI. Correspondance des Administrateurs. The Provincial Council of Ile de France to the Council of Bourbon. 29 Aug. 1729. p. 56.

(2) Ibid. Moret to the S. Council of Bourbon. 21 and 22 Feb. 1731. p. 65, 67-68.

(3) Ibid. The S. Council of Bourbon to the Council of Bengal! July, 1732. p. 219.

ou tous les noirs des habitations ne sont occupés qu'a faire la guerre aux sauterelles." (1)

In 1733 there was a good harvest and surplus rice and maize were sent to Ile de France. (2) But in the following year a cyclone struck Bourbon and this was followed by a drought. The administrators in Bourbon wrote to the Council in Ile de France: "Nous sommes... dans une extrême disette causée par les quatre ouragons... qui ont été suivis d'une affreuse sécheresse depuis 8 mois: de sorte qu'il ne reste plus dans le magasin... ni chez les habitants, aucune espèce de graine... et la grande sécheresse a même fait périr toutes sortes d'espèces de racines et de légumes sans que nous avons aucune ressource dans la chasse ni dans la pêche... Nous serons peut-être forcés de faire tuer des chevaux et des vaches... Cette île si abondante en haricots ne nous en a pu fournir... que très peu, la plupart des habitants les ayant donnés à leurs noirs faute d'autres choses." (3) During this period the main article of diet for almost the entire population was cabbage palm hearts (palmiste) and wild purslane. Most of the Company employees, slaves and soldiers were sent into the forest to fend for themselves. The workmen who were needed for rebuilding property damaged in the cyclone were given preference in the allocation of food.

Ile de France suffered in a similar manner but the colonists were saved from near-starvation by the arrival of a cargo of rice from India on a Swedish ship. In February 1735, however, de Maupin was forced to send all the soldiers, workmen, sailors, Indian servants and slaves into the interior to forage. Some of the colonists had already taken to the forests owing to the shortage of food. Commenting on this state of affairs in the report of 1740 La Bourdonnais wrote: "Il était comme d'une règle annuelle que les soldats, les ouvriers et les habitants de l'Ile de France fussent une partie de l'année dans le bois à vivre de la chasse." (4) The administrators in the island asked for help from Bourbon where in fact conditions may well have been worse. "La famine qui nous afflige," replied the Superior Council, "depuis plusieurs mois, les cris de toute la colonie semblaient exiger de nous de ne point songer à secourir les autres pendant que nous sommes à deux doigts de notre perte, mais nous sommes aussi touchés de votre situation que sensible à la nôtre." (5)

The problem of food production became even more acute in Ile de France after the arrival of La Bourdonnais. The directors of the Company had instructed him to build a depot in the N.W. Port which they intended to make their chief revictualing and refitting station on the route to India. Ships returning to France were expected to carry five months provisions for each member of the crew and an average 800 ton ship had a complement of 200 officers and men. The directors ordered ships' captains to surrender any food left in the hold before taking in new supplies but this rule was difficult to enforce. When two ships of the 'première navigation' arrived in the N.W. Port it is quite probable that the total number of officers and men was greater than the population of the port. In addition, ships which had been damaged either in the crossing from India on the N.E. Trades, or in rounding the Cape, had to remain in the harbour until repairs were completed. Occasionally ships returning to France were unable to round the Cape and forced to return to the Isles where they remained until the westerlies had moderated. From 1735 to 1740 three such ships had to be revictualled in Ile de France. (6)

- (1) Loughon. Correspondance. Vol II. The Superior Council of Bourbon to the Company. 20 October, 1731. p. 142.
- (2) Recueil Trimestriel. Vol VII. Correspondances des Administrateurs. p. 152.
- (3) Ibid. Superior Council of Bourbon to the Provincial Council of Ile de France. 20 July, 1734. p. 160, 164.
- (4) Mémoire (1740) p. 10.
- (5) Recueil Trimestriel. Correspondance des Administrateurs. p. 165.
- (6) Mémoire (1740) Note XIII. p. 103; Loughon. Correspondance. Vol II. Introduction. p. XXXVII-ALIII.

Finally, the unproductive section of the population increased considerably after 1735. Large numbers of workmen and slaves were needed to build the depot and to staff the harbour; the garrison was strengthened in order to defend the factory and hunt down maroons; the 'seconde navigation' was augmented in order to safeguard the supply of food and slaves and a hospital was built.

Bourbon, as a well-established colony, was expected to send food to Ile de France and La Bourdonnais introduced a series of regulations to compel the colonists to grow more food. In 1735 the Company declared a discount on outstanding debts but La Bourdonnais announced that in order to qualify for the concession planters were to bring certain foodstuffs to the Company warehouse, in proportion to the amount of coffee they wished to sell. Colonists were required to surrender 22 lbs. of wheat or rice, 10 lbs. of maize, 9 lbs. of beans and 9 lbs. of meat for each 1,000 lbs. of coffee purchased by the Company. Furthermore after July, 1735 debtors were not to be allowed to purchase imported goods from the Company store unless they paid for them in food. (1)

In 1737 there was a serious shortage of food in both islands. The rice crop on the Coromandel Coast had failed; it was difficult to obtain rice in Madagascar and a ship bringing a cargo of rice from Bengal to Ile de France had been lost in the Ganges. Therefore in December, 1737, the Superior Council of Bourbon introduced yet another regulation with a view to increasing food production. From 1 January, 1738, imported food and textiles from India could only be obtained from the Company in exchange for food grown in Bourbon. Posters were displayed in all the parishes in the island announcing this new regulation. (2) Colonists continued to evade the ruling, however, since goods from Europe and India could be obtained from ships of the Company which always carried a large amount of private cargo. (3)

The colonists in Bourbon were not in fact interested in increasing food production. They probably had sufficient food for their own needs, save when a cyclone struck the island, and they were quite indifferent to the problem of feeding the slaves who formed three quarters of the population. In the report of 1740, La Bourdonnais wrote: "Je remarquai que plusieurs colons n'en gardaient ni n'en pouvaient avoir assez pour leurs noirs, je fis faire une autre délibération... que chaque habitant aurait une certaine grandeur de terrain destiné pour planter des vivres et ceux qui ne se trouveraient pas... on les obligerait d'avoir moins de cafés." (4) This regulation was introduced in Bourbon in September, 1739. In the introduction La Bourdonnais stated that the colonists were growing too much coffee and an insufficient amount of food, "de façon que leurs esclaves se trouvant dépourvus de vivres et d'Habillemens sont forcés... de s'adonner au brigandage, ce qui les expose à se faire tuer où... de se rendre fugitifs." (5) Slave owners were ordered to give their slaves 2 lbs. of rice, potatoes, or maize each day, and to store food for the difficult period between harvests. If they failed to obey this regulation their slaves could lodge a complaint with an official who was authorized to inspect plantations and, if necessary, either to order new land to be cleared or to uproot coffee trees and plant food crops. (6)

By 1740 the food situation in Bourbon seems to have improved, though whether this was due to the measures introduced by La Bourdonnais or to a good harvest is not known. In November, 1740 the Superior Council dumped a large quantity of beans into the sea and in the following year the directors advised the Councillors to buy cereals in relation to the needs of the garrison and the crews of Company ships. (7) When La

(1) Mémoire (1740). p. 98; Recueil Trimestriel. Vol VII. p. 301.

(2) Ibid. Note XI. p. 97.

(3) See page

(4) Ibid. p. 11.

(5) Ibid. Note XI. p. 100.

(6) Ibid. p. 100-102.

(7) Loughon. Correspondance. Vol IV. The Company to the S. Council of Bourbon. 25 March, 1741. p. 170; Vol V. Introduction. p. XVIII.

Bourdonnais left the Isles in 1746 Bourbon was producing sufficient for her own needs regarding wheat and maize and although the cyclone of that year ruined the crops, food production from 1747-1749 increased steadily and huge quantities of cereals were sent to Ile de France and to Pondicherry. In December, 1749, a cargo of flour and salt provisions which had arrived from Europe was re-exported owing to the abundance of food in the Isles. (1)

In Ile de France La Bourdonnais set out to increase the number of domestic fowls. Fresh meat was needed aboard ships of the 'première navigation' owing to the prevalence of scurvy and the only known means of obtaining a regular supply was by having on board a large number of live poultry for meat and eggs. The Governor estimated that he would need between 14,000 and 15,000 fowls each year to supply the demand. In 1735 he introduced a regulation for the colonists to pay their seigneurial rents in poultry. These rents had originally been fixed at 4oz. of coffee per acre under cultivation but since the island did not produce much coffee the rent was normally paid in cereals. The new regulation stated that in future the rent would be calculated on the basis of 16 head of poultry for each 156 acres under cultivation. (2)

In 1737 he introduced another measure. In the introduction it was stated: "Le Conseil voulant animer les habitants à apporter tous leurs soins à la multiplication de la volaille et ne cherchant qu'à favoriser ceux qui témoignent le plus d'émulation... a cru ne pouvoir mieux faire pour les engager que d'attacher aux fournisseurs... les récompenses." (3) Ships' captains were to receive 'billets de volaille' from the chief storekeeper which were exchangeable for poultry received from the colonists. Each colonist who furnished 1000 birds in twelve months and who could produce the requisite number of 'billets de volaille' was to have the first choice of male slaves which arrived in the island. Those who had furnished 600 head of poultry were to have the first choice of adult female slaves. For providing 500 a colonist had the choice of the best boy slave, for 400 the best small boy, and for 300 the best girl slave. (4) When the first distribution had taken place the remaining slaves were allocated in proportion to the number of 'billets de volaille' held by colonists. In the report of 1740 La Bourdonnais wrote: "J'y déclarai publiquement que désormais on aurait ni noirs ni autres choses que proportionnellement au nombre de billets... ce qui fit que tel habitant qui n'avait point de basse-cour en forma bientôt plusieurs." (5) The measure proved effective and captains of ships which anchored in the N.W. Port appear to have been able to purchase as many birds as they required except in time of drought or after a cyclone. (6) It is, however, possible that in the long run this policy was harmful because the colonists were more interested in producing large numbers of birds than in trying to improve existing strains. (7)

Shortly after his arrival La Bourdonnais bought a plantation in the district of Pamplémousses and in 1736 he built Mon Plaisir, a small country house. Various experiments with new crops were made on the estate and they appear to have been successful. When, in 1738, the Company was negotiating with La Bourdonnais for the purchase of Mon Plaisir as a hospital for ships' officers they took into consideration the availability of fresh farm produce. (8)

(1) Loughon. Correspondance. Vol V. Introduction. p. XVIII.

(2) Mémoire (1740) Note 19. p. 95.

(3) Ibid. Note X. p. 95-96.

(4) Ibid. p. 95-96.

(5) Ibid. p. 10.

(6) Ibid. p. 10.

(7) Ibid. Note 20. Cossigny to Orry. 16 March, 1739. p. 96.

(8) Loughon. Correspondance. Vol III. The Company to the Superior Council of Bourbon. 17 February, 1738. p. 141; Recueil Trimestriel, L'Ancien Jardin du Roi. Vol I. p. 486.

From 1735-1742 the directors sent a wide variety of fruit trees, cuttings and seeds to the island together with detailed instructions regarding the best methods of cultivation. In the latter year, however, they suggested to La Bourdonnais that since the plants deteriorated on the long voyage from France, it would be advisable to obtain further supplies from the Cape. (1) The directors were ignorant of local conditions and they drew up paper schemes for growing cereals in the island although the soil, climate and social organisation were more suited to sugar, coffee, indigo and rice growing. Cereals were attacked by locusts and rats, the grain deteriorated rapidly in the granary and the planters found that the purchase price fixed by the Company was far too low to cover the risks entailed. Moreover the colonists had cleared large areas of forest and this appears to have altered local climatic conditions; the clearings near the coast did not receive sufficient rain for cereal growing and the crops had no protection against high winds. (2)

During La Bourdonnais' second tour of duty he encouraged the colonists to grow manioc, a root crop which he had apparently obtained in Brazil in 1741. He was not, however, the first to introduce manioc into Ile de France. In 1738 manioc roots from Senegal were sent to the Isles by the Company and two years later a further supply from Cape Verde arrived. (3) When La Bourdonnais returned from Mahe he devoted much attention to this crop. He grew manioc on his own estate and probably in 1742 he ordered the colonists in Ile de France to grow manioc on their plantations in the proportion of 500 sq. yards for every slave owned. Manioc was particularly suited to the soil and climate of the Isles and it was one of the few food crops which was not attacked by local insect and animal pests. Nevertheless, the planters attempted to evade the order believing that manioc was poisonous but La Bourdonnais persuaded one of the most respected of the colonists to make flour from the root and a reception was organised when cassava loaves were distributed among the guests. On the following day the loaves were inspected and eaten by Company officials and slave owners in Port Louis. (4)

The directors supported La Bourdonnais in his efforts to popularize the growing of manioc and by the end of 1742 the root was being grown on most plantations in the island. Planters in Bourbon realised that manioc was well suited to local conditions and they also began to grow the crop. The directors supplied the administrators of both islands with special apparatus for making cassava bread and within thirty years manioc, together with maize, formed the staple diet of the slaves in both islands. Charpentier de Cossigny considered that the introduction of manioc was La Bourdonnais' chief contribution to the welfare of the Isles. In the 'Mémoire sur l'Ile de France', written in 1764, he wrote: "Le plus grand bien que ce gouverneur ait fait à l'Ile de France et dont l'avantage se fera sentir à la colonie dans tous les temps à venir, c'est d'y avoir porté à son retour des racines de manioc de Brésil... cet arbuste qui croît et se multiplie en fort peu de temps et qui brave les plus fiers ouragans, et... les... sauterelles, met les colons et tous les noirs dans le cas de ne jamais manquer de subsistance". (5)

- (1) Lougnon. Correspondances. vol IV. Extrait du Régistre-Général. 26 June, 1742. p. 42.
- (2) Grant. History of Mauritius. p. 36.
- (3) Ibid. Lougnon. Correspondance. Vol III. The Company to the Superior Council of Bourbon. 10 July, 1738. p. 143; Recueil Trimestriel. Vol I. p. 423-432.
- (4) Pissani. Documents Reunis. p. 20.
- (5) Crépin. Cossigny. p. 64-65.

IV. Economic Affairs : Commerce.

Until 1742 the French East India Company had, in theory, a monopoly of trade in Bourbon and Ile de France. Each year the directors made a rough estimate of the needs of the Isles, based on detailed lists drawn up by the administrators and sent to Paris. Supplies were then purchased in France and, in addition, the Council of Pondicherry was instructed to send merchandise from India. The main requirements of the colonists were food, mainly rice and wheat, slaves, wines and spirits, textiles, metal goods and also coin and bills of exchange redeemable in Pondicherry and Paris. When the colonists in Bourbon began to produce a substantial coffee crop, imports from Europe were increased but famine in India from 1728-1730 prevented the Council of Pondicherry from sending their quota of goods. It appears that from 1732-1735 imports in both islands were at a high level but after the arrival of La Bourdonnais there is evidence that the volume dropped considerably. The credits allowed to colonists from 1729-1734 were so large that the Company decided to restrict imports, in the belief that a reduction would, by restricting the opportunities for spending, induce the colonists to repay their debts. (1)

It is extremely difficult to give an accurate estimate of the annual amount of merchandise sent by the Company to Bourbon and Ile de France after 1735. In 1736 over 110,000 livres worth of merchandise at invoice price entered the Company warehouses; Bourbon received goods to the value of 87,000 livres and Ile de France to the value of 23,000 livres. It has been estimated that the stock in the warehouses in Bourbon rarely exceeded 40,000 livres because at least one half of the imports consisted of materials needed for public works and shipping. It may be assumed that goods to the annual value of about 100,000 livres arrived in the two islands in the years from 1735-1741. Ile de France probably received one fifth of this amount and therefore it would appear that the value of stock in the Company warehouses in Port Louis rarely exceeded 10,000 livres. (2)

Goods imported into Bourbon and Ile de France were always very expensive. The administrators sold the merchandise at prices which were fixed in Paris. European goods usually fetched a profit of 100 per cent, and Indian goods, 50 per cent. Until the arrival of La Bourdonnais the prices were fixed in livres, but since the colonists paid in piastres, the Company almost doubled its profit owing to the favourable exchange rate for piastres in Europe. The Company sent gold, silver and copper coins to the Isles. The silver Spanish piastre was the standard currency, although there were other coins in circulation such as the Indian gold pagoda and copper coins of various kinds. The Spanish piastre was valued at 3 livres 12 sous in the Isles but in Europe its value was 5 livres 5 sous. In June, 1735, however, an ordinance of the Superior Council of Bourbon announced that all European merchandise would in future be sold at prices which conformed to the exchange rate in the Isles. In other words an article which cost 3 livres 12 sous in Europe would henceforth be sold at not more than 7 livres 4 sous or 2 piastres. (3)

There were constant complaints from the administrators and the colonists regarding both the quality and the quantity of imports. The colonies appear to have been dumping-grounds for inferior merchandise

(1) Recueil Trimestriel. Vol II. Esquisse partielle d'une histoire économique de l'Ile de Bourbon pendant la régie... de La Bourdonnais. p. 136-142.

(2) Ibid. p. 136-142.

(3) Mémoire (1740) Note 10. p. 36-37, Note 14. p. 89.

which frequently deteriorated further on the voyage from France or India. After 1735 the directors cut down imports in order to encourage the colonists to repay their debts and, in addition, they often sent stores which they considered vital rather than those which had been asked for by the administrators. For example, owing to the development of Port Louis a substantial proportion of the exports to Ile de France were naval stores, tools and building equipment. The colonists, the Company employees and the troops had money and bills of exchange but there was very little to buy. This state of affairs was particularly resented by those colonists who had discharged their debts to the Company. "Combien ai-je entendu crier," wrote La Bourdonnais in 1740, "contre un pouvoir qui ne veut pas fournir en payant les besoins des colons... Toutes les années nous sommes contraints de faire une liste de distribution de ce que nous pouvons donner proportionnellement à un chacun." (1) La Bourdonnais frequently asked for a greater variety of merchandise but the directors in Paris and the administrators in Pondicherry believed that his demands were excessive and they continued to restrict the export of luxury articles to the Isles. (2)

Nevertheless the colonists could purchase supplies from other sources. Before the arrival of La Bourdonnais foreign ships occasionally called at the Isles with cargoes of merchandise. From 1723-1725 some English ships trading from Madras visited the Isles but in 1727 the directors sent specific instructions forbidding the colonists to purchase supplies from interlopers and in the following year an English ship was confiscated. As a result of this action interlopers rarely visited the Isles although a Portuguese ship was seized in 1732. The colonists, however, continued to obtain goods from officers and men in the 'première navigation' and the island squadron and even from the administrators themselves, who occasionally chartered a ship for a private trading venture.

Officers in the 'première navigation' were allowed to carry a limited amount of cargo which they could sell in French settlements abroad. A captain was permitted to carry free of charge and over a period of twenty months—the normal voyage to and from India—cargo valued at 16,000 livres; a first-lieutenant, 5333 livres and a second-lieutenant, 3200 livres. In wartime the officers were allowed to carry extra private cargo and during the twenty month voyage, a captain could carry a further 12,000 livres of goods, a first-lieutenant, 4,000 livres, and a second-lieutenant, 2,400 livres. In addition, officers had the right to purchase small cargoes of Indian textiles, pepper and coffee and carry them free of charge. Thus a ship of the 'première navigation' with an average complement of eight officers carried private merchandise on their behalf to the value of 31,000 livres. In wartime the amount was much greater since the allowance was increased and the complement of officers might well be as high as twelve or even fourteen. The crew also had a limited right to trade privately; a common seaman could purchase 30 livres of merchandise and a cabin boy, 10 livres during a normal voyage. "On est au dessous de la vérité," writes Cultru, "en évaluant au dixième de la charge du vaisseau les marchandises qu'il était permis d'y placer en vertu même des règlements." (3)

These regulations, generous as they were, seem to have been constantly abused. It was literally impossible to calculate an allowance of cargo to be carried free of charge in terms of money and over a period of twenty months. Moreover, the allowances themselves were so complicated that even a strict and honest captain could not check the malpractices of dishonest subordinates. Most captains probably allowed free cargo space much in

(1) Mémoire (1740) p.40.

(2) Ibid. p.42.

(3) Cultru. Dupleix. p.27-28. I have not found any information regarding the trading privileges of the officers and men in the island squadron.

excess of that authorized by the Company. Smuggling appears to have been the rule; it was, of course, extremely difficult to check the illegal importation of goods in isolated and undermanned settlements and the Company even failed to control smuggling in France. There were elaborate rules for the entry of goods at Lorient and Nantes and customs launches accompanied the ships into harbour but there were fleets of small boats operating off the coast of Brittany which met Indianmen some miles out to sea and loaded the smuggled goods. Occasionally contraband was seized. In 1730 cottons valued at 200,000 livres were discovered at Lorient and two captains who were involved were heavily fined and lost their commands and their merchandise. But few captains were in effect caught; inspectors could be bribed and some of the Company directors appear to have connived themselves at smuggling. (1)

Company officials in the overseas settlements also had the right to trade privately. Whilst in the service of the Company both Dupleix and La Bourdonnais made fortunes by trading in the Far East and the Indian Ocean on their own account. In 1727 the latter, who had resigned from the 'première navigation', was the captain of a ship which was carrying merchandise for Lenoir and the directors of the Council of Pondicherry. This branch of commerce which was called 'Commerce d'Inde en Inde' had at first been a Company monopoly but it was opened to senior Company employees in 1722. The main articles of commerce appear to have been: dates, copper and currants from Basra; teak from Achem; cowrie shells from the Maldives and Manilla; pepper from Mahé and Calicut; salt petre, silver ware and rice from Chandanagore; gold, mercury, camphor and porcelain from China; light woollen materials and perfumes from Persia and coffee from Moka. (2)

The Company paid inadequate salaries and therefore posts usually attracted men whose main interest was this 'commerce particulier'. In his study on Dupleix Cultru describes the prevailing attitude of the Company employees: "Tous les employés étaient sans autre fortune que celle qu'ils avoient pu gagner dans le commerce particulier; leurs appointements leur permettaient à peine de vivre et les malversations paraissent entropassés en coûtume." (3) Thus the private trading ventures of Company employees in the Indian factories and in the Isles were very extensive and a prime consideration of the officials involved. When war broke out between France and England in 1744 Dupleix and La Bourdonnais suffered serious personal losses when a number of their ships were captured and the expedition to Madras was originally conceived as a means of redeeming their losses.

The directors were determined to enforce their trade monopoly in the Isles and La Bourdonnais received instructions to check smuggling. Before 1735 soldiers were used to patrol the shores and to supervise the unloading of cargo but the system was not satisfactory. La Bourdonnais continued to employ soldiers but he also recruited Indian peons and a company of slaves to guard the shores when ships were in port. All confiscated goods were divided among the guards. Nevertheless, there were no trained customs officers to direct the operations and no fast launches and therefore smuggled merchandise could be unloaded by night and taken to one of the many landing places along the coast. Since the colonists were determined to purchase contraband and the personnel of Company ships were eager to sell it was virtually impossible to take effective measures. Furthermore, La Bourdonnais and the councillors sympathised with the colonists; the former reminded the Company on many occasions that it had created a situation which made smuggling inevitable.

(1) Cultru. Dupleix. p. 20, 66, 69; Mémoire (1740) p. 44.

(2) Ibid. p. 129, 141.

(3) Ibid. p. 49.

In 1739 La Bourdonnais, acting on orders from Paris, introduced a comprehensive ordinance to check smuggling in Bourbon where the problem was more acute, owing to the size of the population. The ordinance was mainly concerned with the illegal importation of slaves from Madagascar and East Africa but it also provided against the illegal entry of merchandise. Informers were ordered to lodge complaints either with the military commander of each district or with the Procureur-General. A fine of 500 livres was to be paid for all smuggling offences and the money was to be divided between the informer and the hospital. Company officials who were prosecuted for smuggling offences were to be dismissed. Detachments of soldiers were to be posted aboard Company ships when they were anchored off St. Denis and St. Paul and one or two soldiers were to accompany any long boats sent loaded to the shore. The Superior Council also asked the directors to mark all merchandise which was exported by the Company. (1)

In 1739 the directors attempted to limit the extent of private trading in the Isles in two ways. Firstly, they withdrew the trading privileges of officers and men in the 'première navigation'. Henceforth the Company was to invest the capital which officers and men intended to use for private trading in major commercial enterprises and a thirty per cent dividend was to be paid. (2) Secondly, they decided to increase the quota of goods sent to the Isles and in 1740 and again in 1741 they informed the Council of Pondicherry that they were allocating 6,000 marks (250,000 livres) per year for the purchase of slaves and merchandise in India, for export to Bourbon and Ile de France. In the latter year the Council of Bourbon was assured that all reasonable demands would be met by the factories in India. It appears that a greatly increased volume of Indian merchandise was sent to the Isles in 1741 but when, in the following year, free trade was introduced, the allocation of money for the purchase of goods in India was drastically cut and after 1743 no allocation was made. (3)

In the report of 1740 La Bourdonnais explained that smuggling could not be stopped by purely administrative measures, "parceque les ordonnances qui sont contre le bien, ou l'opinion general, n'ont aucun effet dès que l'on n'est pas dans l'état de les faire exécuter." (4) He set out to prove that the trading monopoly exercised by the French East India Company was a major cause of the economic problems of Bourbon and Ile de France. The Company was primarily a trading corporation but as seigneur of the Isles it was responsible for the welfare of the inhabitants. "Comme seigneur," he wrote, "elle doit chercher à y mettre l'abondance, à rendre son peuple heureux par des lois justes qui les maintiennent dans leurs droits; comme négociant, elle doit profiter de ses privileges pour s'attirer les bénéfices qui lui sont possibles." These two interests, however, were difficult to reconcile and therefore, "la Compagnie se plaint souvent des Iles et les Iles sont toujours mécontents de la Compagnie." (5)

La Bourdonnais, who had been influenced by the teachings of the early physiocrats, advocated a free trade policy. "Le plus sur moyen de remédier à ses inconvenients," he wrote, "est de se gouverner par des lois naturelles. Il est de fait que l'on ne conduit le public au point que l'on veut que par son intérêt particulier, ou par une force supérieure à la quelle on doit s'attendre qu'il se dérobera autant qu'il lui sera possible." (6) In the report of 1740 he argued that free trade would

(1) Mémoire (1740) Note XXXIII. p. 160-162, 172, 175-177.

(2) Loughon. Correspondance. Vol II. introduction. p. XXII-XXIII. I have not discovered how long this new arrangement was in operation. It is certain that smuggling continued on a large scale.

(3) Ibid. Vol IV. Introduction. p. XLIV-ALV.

(4) Mémoire (1740) p. 44-45.

(5) Ibid. p. 75.

(6) Ibid. p. 76.

strengthen the economy of the isles, develop shipping, free the Company from its obligation to purchase the entire coffee crop of Bourbon and encourage the colonists to grow alternative crops. Smuggling would no longer be profitable. "Cet arrangement," he wrote, "est avantageux à la Compagnie en ce que cela la débarrasse de tout ce qu'elle ne voudra point faire, est lui assuré des droits d'entrée sur tout ce que feront les autres." (1)

The directors studied the report and in 1741 they informed the councils that, from January, 1742—to December, 1747, the colonists could trade freely with Indian factories and in Madagascar and East Africa. La Bourdonnais was given instructions, "pour donner la liberté à l'habitant de se procurer par lui même les marchandises propres à son usage et d'envoyer traités pour son compte des noirs." (2) In 1741 when he returned to the isles La Bourdonnais addressed a letter to the Councils advising the colonists: "chercher la fortune par toute la terre, et de rapporter chez eux l'abondance, sans nul empêchement qu'un médiocre droit d'entrée sur les noirs et les marchandises." (3) The directors agreed to place the ships of the Company at their disposal in return for a ten per cent freightage charge and a payment of 50 livres for each slave carried to the isles. When merchandise and slaves arrived in the isles the importers were required to pay a five per cent entry charge for merchandise and an import duty of 50 livres per slave. (4)

When, in 1742, La Bourdonnais returned to the isles after the expedition to Mahé he discovered that the relaxation of the Company monopoly had not led to any marked increase in trade. In August, 1742, he reissued the Company orders of the previous year and later he tried to stimulate interest by organising two societies in Bourbon. These joint-stock companies were formed to provide capital to fit out two ships, the *Aigle* and the *Renommée*, to trade with India. The shareholders, however, were unenthusiastic and the plan fell through. The Governor had soon realised that the free trade experiment was not likely to succeed; in August, 1742, he announced that wines, spirits and textiles were to remain a Company monopoly, a measure intended to safeguard supplies of these vital imports. In 1743, however, he received instructions (dated October, 1742,) from the Company ordering him to free all articles from monopoly restrictions, announcing at the same time that colonists could trade with France. The Councils were advised to promote trade and new regulations were issued: all merchants intending to trade with India were required to carry the merchandise in Company ships to Company depots in India where entry dues were to be paid. The administrators were required to issue permits for all trading ventures and any ships which had not obtained the requisite certificates were liable to be seized as interlopers. (5) New freight charges were announced; merchants who imported goods from India were to pay a freight charge of ten per cent on light goods and twenty per cent on heavy goods. These charges were increased by five per cent for the importation of goods from France. (6)

Despite the abolition of the Company monopoly, the framing of elaborate rules and the efforts of the Governor to encourage the colonists to form trading companies, the experiment was a failure. In Ile de France the population was small, the island did not have a satisfactory cash crop and the colonists lacked capital. In Bourbon there was a larger population and a cash crop which the Company was prepared to purchase despite the difficulty of selling the coffee in

(1) Mémoire (1740) p. 70.

(2) Loughon. Correspondance. Vol IV. Introduction. p. XIII.

(3) See Recueil Trimestriel. Vol II. p. 38-58.

(4) Loughon. Correspondance. Vol IV. Introduction. p. XIII-XIV.

(5) Ibid. p. XIV-XVI.

(6) Recueil Trimestriel. Vol III. p. 217-220.

Europe but the average colonist was heavily in debt and could not contemplate participation in trading ventures. There were admittedly a number of rich planters in the island but they were unwilling to risk their capital. After 1742 war between England and France seemed imminent and in 1744 hostilities finally broke out. Trade with Europe and India thus became virtually impossible.

Although a small number of merchants availed themselves of free trade conditions and imported articles in Company ships, making a huge profit, yet the volume of imports shrank alarmingly and finally the colonists begged the directors to reestablish the Company monopoly. On 30 March, 1745, the directors announced that free trade was to continue until 31 December, 1750, but in March, 1746, the monopoly was reimposed. Colonists were forbidden: "d'introduire, de vendre ou faire vendre... aucuns noirs, boissons, marchandises tant d'Europe que de Chine et des Indes, sous peine de confiscation et de mille piastres d'amende." (1) This reimposition of the Company monopoly did not bring about an immediate increase in imports. War conditions restricted shipping and from July, 1744, to October, 1745, the Company lost 12 ships. In the next few years there was a grave shortage of consumer goods and the situation was further aggravated when, in 1746, La Bourdonnais stripped both islands for his expedition to Madras. The plight of the colonists in Bourbon may be judged from repeated appeals for help from the Superior Council; in October, 1749, they informed the Company that, "la plus grande partie des 2770 blancs et la totalité des 11,860 esclaves étaient nus aux point d'exciter la compassion du coeur." (2)

La Bourdonnais had believed that the economic problems of Ile de France and Bourbon would be solved by the introduction of free trade, and although the Company gave some measure of support, the plan failed, due largely to the lack of capital and initiative on the part of the colonists. La Bourdonnais' other project, however, of bringing prosperity to the Isles by the creation of an entrepot in the N.W. Port, met with strong opposition from the Company. Ile de France seemed to be an ideal centre for the collection and distribution of goods from France, India, China and Bourbon, since it lay in a central position between Europe and India. La Bourdonnais wanted to build a number of large warehouses in the N.W. Port to receive merchandise from Europe and the East. He was confident that the Company would benefit financially if ships in the 'seconde navigation' brought merchandise from India, China and Bourbon to Ile de France, where it would be unloaded and stored. Ships in the 'première navigation' would deposit their cargoes in the Company warehouses to be transhipped by ships of the 'seconde navigation' and then returned loaded to France.

This plan had three advantages. Firstly, it would have diminished the cost of equipping and refitting the Indiamen in the 'première navigation'. These ships were expected to make six voyages to India, each of about two years duration. The Company paid between 120,000 and 180,000 livres for a large merchant ship and the cost of fitting out an Indiaman lay in the region of 75,000 livres. In addition there were wages to be paid and food and naval stores had to be provided during the voyage. (3) If the Indiamen had picked up the Eastern merchandise in Ile de France the voyage would have been shortened by one year and the expenses incurred by the Company would have been cut by at least one third, since ships of the 'seconde navigation' were cheaper to maintain. In the second place, the creation of an entrepot was expected to stimulate shipbuilding as more ships would be needed. Finally, with the development of the N.W. Port, private shipping and mercantile companies would have sprung up, bringing new prosperity to the Isles.

(1) Loughon. Correspondance. Vol IV. Extrait du Régistre Général. 30 March, 1746. p. 246; 6 April, 1746. p. 249-250.

(2) Ibid. Vol V. Introduction. p. IX-X.

(3) Cultru. Dupleix. p. 26, 34.

The directors were not to be won over by these arguments and in November, 1737, they informed La Bourdonnais that the Company, "tout mûrement considéré...ne pensera jamais à former un entrepôt à l'île de France." They went on to say that they were not prepared to finance the construction of additional ships for the 'seconde navigation' or to build new warehouses, and they pointed out that it would be necessary to employ many more workers, to build additional naval stores, to strengthen the fortifications of the island, to increase the size of the garrison and to recruit an artillery regiment for service in the Isles. Apart from the considerable capital outlay entailed, there were, they suggested, a number of problems involved in the trans-shipment of merchandise: "pertes souvent de marchandises dans les déchargements, transports et chargements dont les employés aux Indes ne seraient plus responsables, avaries qui peuvent arriver...les magasins exposés à la fureur des noirs marrons." (1)

La Bourdonnais believed his scheme to be sound and when the work of equipping the N.W. Port was progressing satisfactorily he turned his attention to shipbuilding as a first step towards the creation of an entrepot. By 1740 a schooner had been built and another ship was due to be launched in a few months time. The directors disapproved of this modest shipbuilding programme and in March, 1739, they had ordered La Bourdonnais to abandon the scheme but he ignored their instructions. Moreover, he built two new wings of a hospital in the N.W. Port which could be converted into warehouses and shops, if, as he explained in a report of 1740, "un jour on pensait autrement sur l'entrepôt." (2)

There is surprisingly little evidence regarding La Bourdonnais' activities in the period from 1742-1745, but it seems likely that he was still interested in the formation of an entrepot. The directors continued to be suspicious of his intentions. In 1744 they forbade any further building operations in Ile de France and Bourbon and threatened to surcharge the Governor and Councils if they built without first obtaining permission from the Company. (3) In the following year they informed the Council of Pondicherry: "L'intention de la Compagnie, suivant qu'elle s'en est expliquée avec M. de la Bourdonnaye, n'étant point d'entrer dans tous les projets d'établissements qu'il travail à former à l'île de France, elle a prévenu ce Conseil qu'il ne devait mettre à exécution les demandes qui pourront lui être faites à cet effet qu'autant que l'on lui remettra les fonds nécessaires pour les pouvoir remplir." (4)

This survey of commerce in Ile de France and Bourbon would not be complete without some reference to the organisation of the slave trade. A constant flow of slaves was necessary if the economy of the Isles was to expand. The problem was particularly acute in Bourbon, where the number of colonists had increased considerably owing to the development of a successful cash crop. In 1732 there were at least 800 plantations in Bourbon, needing a minimum of 20 slaves apiece if they were to function efficiently, yet in this year there were only 5,600 slaves in the entire island. In Ile de France it would appear that the question was less pressing since no suitable cash crop had been found and the proportion of slaves to planters was appreciably higher than in Bourbon. (5)

(1) Mémoire (1740) Note. p. 124-125.
 (2) Ibid. p. 17.
 (3) Loughon. Correspondance. Vol IV. The Company to the Superior Council of Bourbon. 9 April, 1744. p. 204.
 (4) Ibid. extrait du Registre général. 15 June, 1745. p. 175-176.
 (5) Ibid. Vol II. The Superior Council of Bourbon to the Company, 15 October, 1732. p. 19-34; Mémoire (1740) p. 9. According to La Bourdonnais, there were in 1735, 61 male colonists and 648 slaves.

Nevertheless, if the island was to fulfil the role designated for it by the Company and become the chief revictualing station in the Indian Ocean, then a considerable number of slaves was needed to clear land and to labour on the new plantations. In addition, slaves were required for a wide variety of jobs; the maintenance and extension of roads; building operations; shipbuilding and harbour duties; and domestic service. They were even employed as militiamen for hunting maroons and in an emergency they were trained as soldiers. Regiments of faithful slaves took part in military operations in India.

The French East India Company had a monopoly of slave trading in the Isles. On the whole the traffic was very lucrative, although the transport of slaves from West Africa was a risky operation. A first-class male slave from the West Africa or Madagascar fetched 600 livres and in 1736 the Superior Council of Bourbon estimated that the annual profit from the sale of slaves in the island exceeded 100,000 livres. Slaves were purchased in four markets: West Africa, Madagascar, East Africa and India. The main slave depot of the Company was situated in Senegal at Fort Louis and the Company also had another slaving centre further south at Goree; Madagascar was to become the chief reservoir of slaves owing to its proximity to the Isles; a regular trade developed between Mozambique and the Isles after 1732; India provided a smaller number and they usually served as workmen or servants rather than plantation workers.

From 1727 to 1731 slaves from West Africa were transported to the Isles direct from the depots at Senegal and Goree but the trade was discontinued owing to the length of the voyage. The mortality rate was appalling as may be judged from a letter which the administrators in Ile de France wrote to the Council of Bourbon in 1731; "Le vaisseau, la Badine... venant de Sénégal mouilla en ce port... de 200 noirs dont il était chargé il nous en a remis 37 en très mauvais état et dont 8 sont déjà morts; le reste est morte pendant la traversée." (1) For some years after 1731 the imports of slaves from West Africa were very small and when, in 1737, the Company agreed to send a greater number, the organisation of the trade was modified. Slaves were sent from the West coast to Lorient and small groups were put aboard ships of the 'première navigation' which were either calling at the Isles on their way to India or collecting the coffee crop in Bourbon. For example, in 1741, the Heron and the Jupiter each brought 50 slaves from Senegal and, in 1743, the Triton and the Duc d'Orleans brought 50 between them. When war broke out in 1744, however, the system was abandoned and the directors made a private arrangement with a ship owner from Nantes who agreed to transport slaves from West Africa to the Isles. (2)

Madagascar proved far more satisfactory as a reservoir for slaves. It was only a few days sail from the Isles and furthermore supplies were good. Control of the trade appears to have been in the hands of a Malagasy king, Andrianababa, or as the French called him, Adrien Baba. This ruler was on friendly terms with the administrators in the Isles and in 1732 he sold Ile Marotte to the company in the hope that a permanent slave depot would be established there. The directors might well have gone ahead with the plan but, in 1739, 17 members of the crew of the Légère were murdered in the island and the project was abandoned. In 1740 the king approached the Acting-Governor of Ile de France, St. Martin, with further proposals. The latter explained that the scheme was impossible, although he invited the Malagasy ruler to set up an entrepot on his own account. In the following year Andrianababa promised to collect 1,000 slaves and 600,000 lbs. of rice for export to the Isles

(1) Recueil Trimestriel. Vol VII. Correspondance des Administrateurs. The Provincial Council of Ile de France to the Superior Council of Bourbon. 17 June, 1731. p. 74.

(2) Loughon. Correspondance. Vol IV. Introduction. p. XLIV.

but it is not known whether he honoured his promise and whether trade continued on a large scale. (1) During the period under review, most of the slaves from Madagascar were purchased by the Company through its agents, the Superior Councils, but there was an illegal traffic in slaves from Madagascar and in 1739 La Bourdonnais introduced a measure to check it.

Indian slaves were purchased by the Councils of Pondicherry and Chandanagore and sent to the Isles and a regular trade developed during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. After the arrival of La Bourdonnais the Company allowed the colonists to make private arrangements to buy slaves in India, provided that Company ships were used for transport, at a charge of 200 livres per head for food and passage. This particular branch of the slave trade was especially sinister for it appears that many of the Indians who were brought to the Isles had either been kidnapped or else recruited under bogus schemes for paid contract labour. A merchant named Judde ran a very profitable business on these lines in Pondicherry and there were others of his kind in Chandanagore. The Councils in India failed to put a stop to this miserable traffic, although they expressed concern about the effect of these operations on Company relations with local princes. (2)

Slave trading with East Africa was not directly controlled by the French East India Company, although their ships appear to have been used to transport slaves to the Isles. Foreign ships were forbidden by Portugal to trade with their settlements in Mozambique and the Viceroy had received orders to seize all interlopers. The trade, however, appears to have developed after 1732 when Dumas, Governor of the Isles, sent the *Viège de Grace* to Mozambique. The captain returned with 368 negroes and the success of this voyage encouraged further enterprises. La Bourdonnais continued to exploit this trade in collaboration with other senior officials and in 1742, the *Aigle* and the *Parfaite*, and in 1744, the *Jupiter* and the *Parfaite*, brought cargoes of slaves from this area. (3)

Slaves from Madagascar, India and Mozambique were usually carried in ships of the island squadron. There were during the governorship of La Bourdonnais between six and eight ships in this fleet and they were used to bring rice, textiles and slaves to the Isles. The squadron, however, was too small to meet the demands made upon it and ships of the 'première navigation' and special slave ships from West Africa were called upon to assist. For example, the *Medusa*, which carried 237 slaves from the Guinea Coast in 1729, remained in the Isles until December, 1731, and during this time it made three voyages to Madagascar and carried nearly 1,000 slaves. Again, in 1731, the *Duc de Noailles* brought 50 slaves from West Africa and then sailed to Madagascar, bringing 361 slaves for Bourbon (4)

Reliable figures for imports of slaves are difficult to obtain, since it is possible that the administrators submitted false returns to the Company and withheld information regarding their private ventures in Mozambique. In addition slaves were imported privately from India on Company ships and smuggled in from Madagascar. From 1727 to 1731, according to official figures, Bourbon received about 3,300 slaves, 2,000 from Madagascar, 1,000 from West Africa, and 300 from India (5), bringing the total figure, in 1732, to 5,500 in the whole island. During the next four years imports included a further 1,100 slaves from Madagascar, about 300 from Mozambique and 100 or so from India. The flow of slaves continued steadily and by 1749 the slave population of Bourbon was estimated at 11,860 (6), including presumably slaves born in the island

(1) Loughon. Correspondance. Vol IV. Introduction. p. XLVI-XLVII, Extrait du Registre Général. 26 June, 1742. p. 40-41.

(2) Ibid. p. XLVI, Extrait du Registre Général. 19 June, 1743. p. 84.

(3) Ibid. p. XLVII-XLIX.

(4) Ibid. Vol I. Introduction. p. XXXIV-XXXVII.

(5) Ibid. p. XXXVIII.

(6) Ibid. Vol V. Introduction. p. X.

although this internal increase was no doubt balanced by deaths due to epidemics which regularly swept the Isles, and by the numbers of slaves who escaped into the forests. From 1735-1740 the slave population in Ile de France increased fourfold, reaching a figure of 2,612. (1)

The distribution of slaves was always a source of friction, not only among the colonists, but also between the Councils of the two islands. Since ships usually called first at Ile de France, it is possible that the administrators selected the best slaves from each cargo and took more than their fair share; the Superior Council of Bourbon frequently complained of unfair distribution, the more so as Ile de France seemed to have a surplus of slaves, as exemplified by the steady flow of slaves from Ile de France to Bourbon where the need was greater and prices higher. La Bourdonnais himself exported a batch of slaves to Bourbon in 1738.

Internal distribution was determined by the Governor and Councils, who usually appropriated a mixed group of between 15 and 20 slaves from each 100 new arrivals, for the Company slave gangs. In Ile de France La Bourdonnais decided that slaves should be distributed in relation to the number of 'billets de volaille' held by a colonist. In Bourbon a law was passed in 1739, stating that all slaves were to be kept by the Council until December of each year, when there was to be a big auction, details of which were to be published throughout the island in October. Before the sale the slaves were to be divided into batches of 15; the Council then drew lots for the Company quota and the remainder were distributed according to the size of the plantation and the number of slaves already owned. It is not clear, from La Bourdonnais' report, whether this system, with its obvious drawbacks, was maintained and whether it had the desired result of ensuring a fairer distribution. (2)

(1) Mémoire (1740) p. 9, 38.

(2) Ibid. Note XXXIII. p. 160-161, 175. As an additional precaution it was stated that company officials who obtained slaves through private trading ventures were not to sell them for two years, nor were they to sell them under assumed names.

IV. Economic Affairs : The Public Debt.

In the early eighteenth century the French East India Company considered that the most effective method of controlling the activities of the colonists was "de rendre l'Habitant toujours débiteur à la Compagnie." (1) This policy, however, defeated its own ends and when, in 1730, the public debt in Bourbon and Ile de France exceeded 1,000,000 livres, the Company began to agitate for repayment. The development of a successful cash crop in Bourbon led to a considerable increase in the island's population. New colonists were allowed to borrow slaves, tools and foodstuffs to tide them over the early years. They were expected to repay the loans in coffee which was accepted in the Company warehouses at a price fixed in 1722. Some of the planters who had been in the island for a number of years had managed to pay off their debts but in the seventeenth twenties there were a great many planters who had been in the colony for about ten years and who had not been able to pay more than a small fraction of their debts. By 1730 the directors realised that the situation was getting out of hand. As the population increased the Company was called upon to provide for the newcomers, the majority of whom were entirely without financial resources, and there was little hope of recovering these debts for a number of years. Moreover, colonists who were already established, showed no signs of honouring their debts. (2)

The situation in Bourbon was aggravated by the outbreak of a smallpox epidemic in 1729 which caused the death of a large number of slaves. In the same year the colonists suffered considerable losses on account of locusts which attacked the food growing areas of the island. To add to the general hardship the period from 1729-1732 was remarkable for the violence of the cyclones. The effects of these varied disasters were serious and far-reaching. Planters who lost their slaves and their crops were forced to borrow from the Company, which was faced with a decrease in production and an increase in the demand for further credit. The directors accepted this policy in the hope that the island would soon produce sufficient coffee of high quality to justify the new advances.

The situation in Ile de France was somewhat different. It was not until 1727 that the Company decided to make serious efforts to develop the island. During the next few years several families from France and Bourbon, some married soldiers discharged from the garrison in Pondicherry and a number of women from Brittany settled in Ile de France. When, in 1731, the directors decided to use the N.W. Port as a port of call and revictualling station for Company ships, the need for food became more pressing, and anyone who was prepared to settle and grow food was offered land and generous credit. Colonisation was slow and the call on Company credit correspondingly small. However, the colonists do not appear to have made much effort to develop their plantations; as La Bourdonnais remarked: "Je remarquai... qu'une quantité de personnes se faisaient habitants seulement pour vivre des avances que la Compagnie donnait aux nouveaux colons; et que lors qu'il s'en trouvait de fainéants, tout tombait en pure perte à la Compagnie" (3) In spite of this, the Company was forced to support the planters in these early years, if the colonisation of Ile de France was to prove worthwhile.

(1) Lougnon. Correspondance. Vol I. The Company to the Superior Council of Bourbon. 10 October, 1725. p. 7.

(2) Ibid. Vol II. Introduction. p. XVII-XVIII.

(3) Mémoire (1740) p. 8.

In 1735 the planters in Bourbon owed the Company between 1,200,000 and 1,400,000 livres; figures for Ile de France are not known, but the total debt was probably less than 150,000 livres. Nevertheless the directors tended to regard the Isles as one administrative unit and therefore the machinery for the recovery of debts applied equally to both islands, the colonists being expected to repay their debts by the sale of produce to the Company. The administrators were supposed to retain two thirds of the purchase price of all produce accepted in the Company warehouses for the repayment of debts and the colonists were allowed to buy imported goods in proportion to the remaining one third. In Ile de France this policy was quite unrealistic because the colonists were not yet established and they rarely had any food or cash crops to sell and, in addition, almost unlimited credit was needed if the island was to function effectively as a fitting and revictualling station. In Bourbon the policy of the Company proved to be impracticable since the disasters in the period from 1729-1732 upset the machinery for the recovery of debts and increased the size of the debts themselves.

By 1734 the directors decided to restrict credit and to use all methods at their disposal to recover outstanding debts. In Bourbon no further credit, save for the growing of experimental crops, was to be given. In Ile de France, where the public debt was small, loans to newly arrived colonists were to be restricted to 4,000 livres in slaves. (1) La Bourdonnais was asked to devise new machinery to speed up the rate of repayment. He persuaded the directors to declare an annual discount on voluntary repayment of debts and later he tried to organise a system of obligatory repayments based on the number of slaves owned. In 1736 a 40% discount was declared and a substantial number of planters appear to have taken advantage of the scheme, but in the following years the discount was reduced. In 1737 it was 33½%, in 1738, 25%, in 1739, 20% and in 1740 it was only 16½%. La Bourdonnais remarked in the report of 1740 that as the rate of discount fell, "l'objet non était pas assez considerable pour engager les habitants débiteurs à se hâter de payer." (2) The system of annual obligatory repayments was introduced in 1739. The repayments were to be levied in relation to the number of slaves owned and if a colonist refused to pay his debts his slaves were to be seized and sold at a public auction. The policy however does not appear to have succeeded. (3)

All attempts by administrators in the Isles to recover even a small proportion of outstanding debts were destined to fail because the colonists had in fact no intention of acquitting their obligations. They knew that the administrators could not seize the property of all inhabitants owing money to the Company; as La Bourdonnais remarked; "Tous sont dans une sécurité parfaite... parce que la Compagnie ne se déterminera ni ne peut prendre un parti violent contre une colonie en entier." (4) If a plantation and a number of slaves were seized by order of the Superior Council and put up for auction the colonists refused to purchase them; if the Council withheld imported merchandise from debtors they purchased smuggled goods. Moreover, rather than deposit their produce in the Company warehouses, where the greater part was seized for the repayment of debts, the colonists preferred to make private arrangements with wealthy planters who had paid off their debts to sell their crops for cash, or alternatively they sold their produce to passing ships. (

The Company meanwhile used indirect methods to compel the colonists to repay their debts. The directors believed that restrictions on the export of European and Indian merchandise, together with the regulation of exports of coin, would create an economic atmosphere favourable to

(1) Mémoire (1740) p. 8.
 (2) Ibid. Note IV. p. 86.
 (3) Ibid. p. 7-8, Note VI. p. 87-90, Note VIII. p. 90-94.
 (4) Ibid. p. 7.

to the repayment of debts. The reduction in imports, however, did not lead to any improvement in the rate of repayment. Company ships calling at the Isles carried private cargoes which the colonists were able to buy and La Bourdonnais himself fitted out a number of ships which brought supplies from India, the Cape and Mozambique. As the volume of exports, from the Company decreased, the prices of foreign goods rose and ships captains were tempted to exceed their quota of legal private trading and to smuggle luxury goods into the isles. Moreover, colonists who had paid off their debts purchased supplies in bulk from the Company stores and resold them to debtors. (1)

The problem of recovering outstanding debts was complicated by the fact that the administrators themselves were heavily in debt. In October, 1734, the directors warned the Superior Council of Bourbon: "Les crédits faits aux employés et officiers... absorbent presque les tiers de ce qui est dû en totalité à la Compagnie... Elle n'est pas fâchée que ceux qui sont à son service jouissent du bénéfice... mais les crédits ont été faits avec trop peu de mesure." (2) After 1735 credit was severely restricted in Bourbon but Company officials were able to borrow money for growing experimental crops and there can be little doubt that advances were made to councillors and others who had no intention of fulfilling the conditions of the loan. Moreover, Company officials newly arrived in Ile de France could borrow 4,000 livres in slaves. The Governor seems to have had special facilities for obtaining credit; when La Bourdonnais left the Isles in 1746 he owed the Company 148,995 livres. (3)

Thus the Governor and Company officials were bound to take the part of the colonists. In November, 1736, the Superior Council of Bourbon drew up a balance sheet, the object of which may well have been to persuade the directors to introduce a long-term system of repayment. It was pointed out that the profit from the sale of coffee was only one aspect of Company profits; apart from the returns from the receipt of royalties of 4oz. of coffee per acre, which in 1734 amounted to 31,292 lbs., the Company received transfer dues, a profit of 50% on imports from India, 100% on imports from Europe and 100,000 livres per annum from the sale of slaves. (4) The balance sheet, however, failed to convince the directors and in February, 1738, they advised the administrators to cut down expenditure and to press for the immediate repayment of debts.

Although La Bourdonnais was well aware of the fact that the colonists did not intend to honour their obligations, yet, as an administrator, he was obliged to formulate policies in order to satisfy the directors who were for ever pressing for immediate repayment. In the report of 1740 he advised the Company: "le plus sûr (moyen) est de convenir avec eux... l'un après l'autre de ce qu'ils peuvent payer par année... si quelqu'un ne voulait pas entrer en composition, la Compagnie est en droit de lui faire vendre son habitation et une ou deux exemples de sévérité frappés sur les plus entêtés rendraient tous les autres traitables." (5) On his return to the Isles in 1741 he instructed the superior council of Bourbon to order all colonists to repay what they owed in instalments, in relation to the number of slaves owned. In March, 1741, the directors, acting on the advice of La Bourdonnais, issued specific instructions to the administrators in Bourbon to force the planters either to make a solemn promise before a notary to pay their debts in instalments or alternatively to pay a substantial lump sum as

(1) Loughon. Correspondance. Vol II. Introduction. p. XXIX-XXXIII.

(2) Ibid. The company to the Superior Council of Bourbon. 11 October, 1734 p. 209.

(3) Ibid. Vol V. Introduction. p. XIX-XXI.

(4) Ibid. Vol II. Introduction. p. XIX-XX.

(5) Mémoire (1740) p. 66.

a token of their good faith. Colonists who failed to comply with the new regulations were to lose their houses, moveable property and land and these were to be put up for auction. If they remained unsold after a certain period the Company was to purchase them. (1)

In the report of 1740 La Bourdonnais put forward a number of arguments in favour of free trade. He believed that if the directors agreed to annul the Company monopoly of trade, the Isles would develop more rapidly and their economic problems would be solved; as the colonists grew richer so they would be able to discharge their debts. He convinced the directors of the soundness of this policy and in 1741, when he returned to the Isles, he addressed a letter to the two Councils advising the colonists to take advantage of the relaxation of the Company monopoly. But the experiment was doomed to failure; the islands lacked capital; a career at sea was unpopular; there were few ships available for private enterprise. In 1742 war with England seemed likely and two years later hostilities actually broke out. The maintenance of regular trade relations between India and the Isles, even under the aegis of the Company, was precarious in peacetime, but in wartime it was impossible. Thus the introduction of free trade did not increase the wealth of the islands and the colonists' debts remained unpaid. In 1743 the colonists in Bourbon and Ile de France owed the Company 1,320,000 livres and 700,000 livres respectively. (2)

By 1743 the directors were prepared to face the unpalatable truth that the advances made by the Company were not likely to be recovered by administrative action alone. They had reduced the volume of imports; harsh measures had been tried; they had permitted free trade. In 1741 La Bourdonnais informed Orry that even if the Superior Council confiscated the estates of recalcitrant debtors, the majority of planters would have had to borrow money in order to pay for the estates. Therefore the Company decided to tackle the problem in an entirely new way. It appears that in 1742 a group of planters in Bourbon offered to farm the public debt. This offer was rejected, but in November, 1743, the directors announced that the Company was willing to transfer the entire debt at a high discount rate to "une compagnie bonne et solvable s'il s'en présentait une." (3) They believed that the chances of recovering the advances were so slender that they were prepared to cut their losses and to declare a rate of discount of 50% in return for a reasonably prompt repayment of the remaining half. (4)

In 1744 La Bourdonnais advised the colonists in Bourbon to take advantage of the scheme, although he proposed certain modifications. In July, 1744, he ordered the inhabitants to choose four delegates from each quarter, who were to meet in St. Denis on 31 July. At the meeting he explained the new proposals and expressed the opinion that it would not be to the colonists advantage if a small group of speculators purchased the entire public debt at half price. He advised the colonists to shoulder the public debt themselves by subscribing to a fund which, he insisted, should be organised on the broadest possible basis. The deputies produced a scheme which was vetoed by the Governor and on 3 August he proposed an alternative scheme. The colonists owed the Company 1,320,000 livres and the Company was prepared to sell the debt for 660,000 livres. La Bourdonnais proposed to raise an immediate sum of 100,000 livres and to pay off the residue in six annual repayments. The deputies were asked to find subscribers and La Bourdonnais himself promised to participate in the scheme. On 8 August the deputies reassembled in St. Denis and announced that twelve colonists had promised to lend 25,000 livres

(1) Loughon. Correspondance. Vol. I. The Company to the Superior Council of Bourbon. 25 March, 1741. p. 168-169, 171-172.

(2) Ibid. Vol. IV. Introduction. p. X, XXIII.

(3) Ibid. Extrait du Régistre Général. 11 April, 1744. p. 149.

(4) Ibid. p. 149-150. It is not known whether this measure applied to the Ile de France.

between them. They expected La Bourdonnais to provide the remaining 75,000 livres. (1)

Unfortunately the colonists suspected that La Bourdonnais was hoping to benefit financially from the transaction and the deputies expressed certain opinions which angered the Governor. They were dismissed and on 12 August La Bourdonnais introduced a measure in the Superior Council to create a sinking fund, administered by one of the councillors and a staff of four, a notary, a collector, a book-keeper and a secretary. The councillor was to be given authority to borrow money at 10% in order to repay the Company within three years. Bonds at an interest rate of 10% were to be issued and repayments assured by remittances from the debtors, which were deducted from the sale of coffee to the Company. (2)

In spite of La Bourdonnais' efforts, nothing came of the scheme. In the following year the fund was closed by order of the Council of State and the directors sent a severe reprimand to the Council of Bourbon: "Il est bien disgracieux pour la Compagnie après tous les tempéraments qu'elle a pris jusqu'à présent pour le recouvrement de ses dettes, d'être, pour ainsi dire toujours au même point. Elle ne peut voir qu'avec une vraie peine que rien s'exécute; c'est une proposition une année; la suivante c'en est une autre qui détruit la première; une réflexion en a même une autre, le temps s'écoule et rien ne finit." (3)

David, Governor of the Isles from 1746-1753, was no more successful than La Bourdonnais. On 1 April, 1750, the Superior Council informed the Company: "Le meilleur parti est de temporiser et, en pressant les débiteurs d'en arracher ce que l'on peut jusqu'à ce que les temps deviennent meilleurs par les nouvelles cultures ou les nouvelles caffeteries que l'on plante dans les hautes." (4) But better times did not arrive and the Company never recovered the advances they had made. Oddly enough, the colonists in Bourbon who had borrowed money privately from La Bourdonnais, discharged their debts. When he left the Isles he owed the Company 148,895 livres; by 1752 his agent in Bourbon had collected the entire sum which was deposited with the Superior Council in acquittal of La Bourdonnais' own debts. (5)

(1) Loughon. Correspondance. Vol IV. Introduction p. XXII-XXIII.
(2) Ibid. p. XXIII-XXIV.
(3) Ibid. The Company to the Superior Council of Bourbon. 9 April, 1745. p. 201.
(4) Ibid. The Superior Council of Bourbon to the Company. 1 April, 1750. p. 247.
(5) Ibid. Vol V. The Superior Council of Bourbon to the Company. 12 April, 1747. p. 48; 17 February, 1750. p. 221-222.

V. Government and Internal Security: Administration.

At the beginning of the French occupation of Bourbon the island was administered by a Conseil Privé which had the dual function of enforcing Company policy and dispensing justice. It was composed of six elected members, the 'éius', and a retired soldier who was probably nominated by the commander of the troops. Since the civil and military authorities were independent of each other, with no clear division of responsibilities, the president was either the senior civilian official of the Company, who had the title of Governor or Director-General of Commerce, or the commander of the troops. (1)

In 1711 a Provincial Council was set up by royal edict. The new council, which appears to have been a purely civilian body, was composed of the Governor, the priests and curés, who were regarded as senior councillors, and three locally elected members. The clerical members absented themselves from those sessions when the Council sat as a court of justice dealing with criminal cases but they took part in all civil processes. In addition they dealt with minor offenses, in what might be termed the petty sessions, together with the commander of the local militia and the councillor who lived in the parish where the offence had been committed. Appeal could be made to the Council, meeting in full session at St. Dennis. When the Council sat as a court, judgements were made by five councillors in civil processes and by seven in criminal processes and therefore the Governor and the elected members chose outsiders to form a quorum. The elected members, who were probably Company officials with large plantations, were chosen by a system of secret ballot, the voting papers being placed in a box in the presence of a priest. Their term of office was usually of one year's duration, though they could be re-elected, and they took an oath of loyalty before the congregation in the church of St. Denis. The Council, originally created as a court of justice, became almost wholly concerned with administration. (2) Laws, which might be Royal Letters Patent, orders from the Company or bye-laws and judgements of the Provincial Council, were read after mass on Sundays, when attendance was compulsory, in the churches of St. Denis, St. Paul, and Ste. Suzanne. (3)

The development of a cash crop altered the character of Bourbon. The Provincial Council proved inadequate for dealing with the complex administrative problems of an island with an increasing population and in 1723 a Superior Council was set up, with judicial, legislative and administrative powers and composed of a president, the Governor (4), six councillors, a legal advisor (Procureur-Général) and a registrar. The new council was a lay body; the clerical members were replaced by senior officers of the garrison, the other councillors being Company employees, though local planters and captains of Company ships were frequently called upon to serve. (5)

(1) Guet. Bourbon. p. 213-214.

(2) This was probably due to two factors: in the first place land was plentiful and therefore land disputes were rare, and secondly, cases involving slaves, who formed the greater part of the population, never reached the court.

(3) Recueil Trimestriel. Vol V. Mémoire sur l'île Bourbon Adressé par la Compagnie... au Gouverneur Parat. p. 254-256.

(4) The Governor had to vacate the seat if a Company director visited the island.

(5) Loughon. Correspondance. Vol I. Introduction. p. XLI-XLII.

The new council proved to be ineffective. From 1723-1727 the senior councillors were usually officers from the garrison and this led to a serious conflict between the civil and military authorities. In 1727 the Company appointed Pierre Benoist Dumas (1696-1746) as, "Gouverneur pour le Roi de l'Ile Bourbon, Président du Conseil Supérieur et Directeur-Général des affaires de la Compagnie des Indes dans les îles de Bourbon et de France." The new Governor was instructed to subordinate military government to the civil authority. "L'objet principal de la Compagnie dans toutes ses concessions," wrote the directors, "étant le commerce et la culture des terres, elle a jugé à propos de diviser le gouvernement civile du militaire, et en conséquence de régler les fonctions de plume et de guerre, afin qu'un chacun applique particulièrement à son emploi, en puisse remplir exactement les parties sans être distrait par d'autres soins." (1) Dumas arrived in Bourbon in July, 1727, armed with extensive powers. He was responsible for Company affairs, public order and shipping and the commander of the garrison, de Courchant, was required to take all orders from him. In the same year, however, de Courchant was recalled and the Governor of Pondicherry, Lenoir, was made responsible for military affairs in his capacity of 'Commandant -Général de tous les Etablissements Francaises dans les Indes.' (2)

Dumas was required to spend three months of each year in Ile de France. From 1721 to 1726 the island was governed by an administrative council, composed of six members, the Governor, the Intendant, who represented the King, the Chief-Engineer, two Lazarist fathers and the surgeon. When, in 1723, a Superior Council was set up in Bourbon, a Provincial Council, subordinate to it, was established in Ile de France. (3) The new council was not organised until 1726 and it was, at first, regarded as of minor importance. The Superior Council of Bourbon heard appeals against judicial decisions of the Provincial Council and it exercised considerable control over the day-to-day administration of Ile de France. The Company addressed all general orders to the Superior Council, which was responsible for filling in the administrative details. The Superior Council could issue laws which applied to both islands and it scrutinised all grants of land made by the Provincial Council. (4)

The Provincial Council was composed of the Governor, the Intendant, five or six councillors who were usually Company officials, a legal advisor and a registrar. The Governor presided, save when the Governor of the Isles or a director was visiting Ile de France. When the Council met as a court of justice, civil judgements had to be given by three councillors and criminal judgements by five councillors, though outsiders could be called upon to make a quorum. Royal Letters Patent, Company orders and judicial and administrative decisions of the Council were announced by a priest in the church of St. Louis after Mass on Sundays. (5)

The new Council did not function smoothly. From 1727 to 1729 there were bitter quarrels between the Intendant, de Brousse, who was Acting-governor from 1724-1729, and two of the councillors, St. Martin, the chief storekeeper, and Floch. The rivalry between de Brousse and St. Martin was so intense that the Council did not meet from July, 1728, to March, 1729, when Dumas arrived in the island and called a meeting of all the inhabitants. As a result the Provincial Council was reorganised; de Brousse was appointed president of the Council with responsibility for military affairs and St. Martin was given the title of Chief Councillor, being responsible for local law and order and the administration of the two ports. (6) In the same year, however, the Company appointed a new Governor, de Maupin. Both civil and military affairs were placed under his control and the office of Intendant was abolished. (7)

(1) Guet. Bourbon. p. 296.

(2) Loughon. Correspondance. Vol I. Introduction. p. XLIII.

(3) Pitot. Ile de France. p. 4-5.

(4) Loughon. Correspondance. Vol II. Introduction. p. XLV-XLVII.

(5) Pitot. Ile de France. p. 24-25.

(6) Loughon. Correspondance. Vol I. Introduction. p. XLIV; Pitot. Ile de France. p. 8.

(7) Ibid. The Company to the P.C. of Ile de France. 24 July, 1729. p. 89.

The Superior Council of Bourbon continued to exercise general supervision over the administration of Ile de France and appeals against judicial decisions were submitted to it. Dumas was expected to spend three months of each year in the island, during which time he presided over the Provincial Council. In 1729 or early in 1730 he advised the directors of the Company to create a separate administration in Ile de France, pointing out that Bourbon needed a full-time Governor who could devote all his time to the administration of that island. The directors agreed and in a despatch dated December, 1730, the Provincial Council of Ile de France was given full responsibility for the internal administration of the island. The Superior Council of Bourbon, however, was to remain the final Court of Appeal; it was responsible for defence; and since Bourbon at that time was the chief port of call for ships of the Company, it was to deal with all matters concerning shipping.

Relations between the two islands deteriorated rapidly after 1730. The administrators in Ile de France strongly resented any interference by the Superior Council of Bourbon in internal affairs of the island and in October, 1732, the Superior Council complained to the Company: "Les messieurs de l'Ile de France prétendent qu'ils n'ont aucunes ordres à recevoir de nous." (1) Bad feeling between the two administrations was heightened by the fact that the colonists in Bourbon believed that the merchandise and slaves, sent to Bourbon via Ile de France, was of inferior quality, the administrators in Ile de France taking their pick of whatever was sent out to the Isles. The administrators in Ile de France for their part resented reversal of their judicial decisions by the Court of Appeal in Bourbon. Relations grew more strained and in 1733 the administrators in Bourbon wrote to the Company: "Nous espérons que la Compagnie voudra bien reprimer dans ces messieurs cet esprit d'insubordination et d'anarchie qui leur est trop familier." (2) In the following year the Superior Council accused the Governor of Ile de France, de Maupin, of fomenting bad feeling: "M. de Maupin," they wrote, "est le premier à se cabrer et à communiquer aux autres l'esprit d'insubordination." (3) In April, 1735, the Superior Council informed the Company that the Provincial Council was withholding information about the voyages of ships in the Isles: "Messieurs de l'Ile de France," they wrote, "avaient expédié un vaisseau pour Madagascar non seulement avec défense de venir ici, mais même encore que la capitaine était porteur d'un ordre pour le capitaine d'Atalante, de porter toute sa cargaison à Ile de France." (4)

La Bourdonnais described the situation in the report of 1740: "Il régnait entr'elles une espèce d'antipatie qui influait sur toutes les affaires qui leur étaient communes, et la Compagnie était toutes les années accablée de mémoires aussi ennuyeux qu'infructueux à son service." (5) The directors were wholly dissatisfied with this state of affairs; an improvement in the relations between the two islands was deemed essential as it was felt that Bourbon could help in accelerating the development of her poorer neighbour. In October, 1734, they informed the administrators in Bourbon: "La Compagnie n'a pas vu avec moins de peine que l'établissement de cette île a excité chez vous une jalousie qui quoique mal fondée, n'est pas moins fait sentir toutes les fois que vous avez l'occasion d'en parler dans vos lettres." (6) In the same year La Bourdonnais was appointed Governor of the two islands and a Superior Council, authorized by royal edict on 4 November, 1734, was set up in Ile de France. It was also announced that

(1) Recueil Trimestriel. Vol VI. Correspondance des Administrateurs .p.53.
 (2) Ibid. p. 62.
 (3) Ibid. p. 171.
 (4) Loughon. Correspondance. Vol II. The Superior Council of Bourbon to the Company. 4 April, 1735. p. 271.
 (5) Mémoire (1740) p. 4.
 (6) Loughon. Correspondance. Vol II. The Company to the Superior Council of Bourbon. II October, 1734. p. 133

each council was fully authoritative when the Governor himself presided. They had equal powers but the Governor-in-Council could issue orders applicable to both islands. (1)

During his first tour of fifty eight months, La Bourdonnais spent twelve months only in Bourbon (2) and therefore the Superior Council of Ile de France was bound to play a more important role in the government of the two islands. The councillors in Bourbon were soon aware of this state of affairs and in August, 1735, they complained to the Company: "Nous voyons avec chagrin que la Compagnie ni nous ne pourrons tirer tout l'avantage que nous avons espéré de son attachement à nos intérêts, de son activité et l'abondance des ressources et expédients qui lui sont si naturels, puisqu'il doit passer les trois quarts de son temps à l'île de France." (3) It was, however, essential for La Bourdonnais to remain in Ile de France from December to March of each year to supervise the refitting of Indiamen which were returning to Europe. In addition his presence was necessary in the N.W. Port whilst the work of construction was in progress.

When they met in an administrative capacity, the Superior Councils were usually composed of five members. An examination of the regulations which are reproduced in the report of 1740 suggests that the composition of the Council in Ile de France was fairly constant from 1735 to 1740. In Bourbon, however, there was much absenteeism and therefore the composition of the Council changed frequently. In 1734 the Company ordered the councillors in Bourbon to attend all meetings at which Company despatches were to be read and at which the annual report was drawn up but attendance continued to be irregular and documents were circulated among absentees, who wrote comments in the margin and appended their signatures. When the documents were returned they were studied by a council which often included clerks and visiting sea captains. (4)

The Company inevitably attracted adventurers and 'men on the make', whose main aim and interest was to make their fortune in private trading. Actual salaries were low but income was augmented in many ways. From 1735 to 1740 the Governor received some 6,000 livres per annum and the two Directors of Commerce had a salary of 3,500 livres per annum. In addition they were entitled to a generous wine and spirit allowance and the right to trade privately from the Cape to China. Councillors were paid according to seniority; the First Councillor had 2,000 livres per annum, with four casks of wine and one of brandy; the second Councillor received 1,500 livres, three casks of wine and one of brandy; the remaining three councillors had an annual salary of 1,200 livres, two casks of wine and one of brandy. (5) The councillors, together with the Governor and the Directors of Commerce, also shared the proceeds of a 6% levy on coffee exports from Bourbon, a most valuable perquisite; from 1740 to 1741 La Bourdonnais alone received 27,831 livres from this source. (6) The senior officials and councillors in both islands appear to have appropriated a percentage of the rents paid by the colonists and they probably received gifts in return for grants of land in excess of that authorized by the Company. (7) In addition Company employees were given ample credit which could be turned to good advantage and in 1734 it was estimated that one third of the public debt of Bourbon was owed by Company officials.

(1) Loughon. Correspondance. Vol II. Introduction. p. XVIII.

(2) Mémoire (1740) Note 2. p. 83. When the Governor was absent from Bourbon, or Ile de France, a Director of Commerce presided at meetings of the Councils. In Bourbon this officer was Lémery-Dumont and in Ile de France, Didier de St. Martin.

(3) Loughon. Correspondance. Vol II. The Superior Council of Bourbon to the Company, 12 August, 1735. p. 278.

(4) Ibid. The Company to the Superior Council of Bourbon. 11 October, 1734. p. 250; Introduction. p. LX.

(5) Recueil Trimestriel. Vol I. p. 507-508.

(6) Loughon. Correspondance. Vol IV. Introduction. p. LVIII.

(7) Ibid. Vol V. The Company to the Superior Council of Ile de France. 22 Feb. 1748. p. 65.

The councillors were assisted by a staff of clerks. In Bourbon there were only two in 1727 and soldiers from the garrison were often required to help out. In 1734 the Company increased the clerical staff in the island to nine; three chief clerks, four ordinary clerks and two copyists. The Council found that this number was still insufficient and in 1736 three more were appointed. The registrar and the secretary of the Council had from 900 to 1,000 livres per annum and a wine and spirit allowance; chief clerks had 900 livres per annum, second class clerks had 800 livres per annum and junior clerks 700 livres. All clerks had a wine and spirit allowance. The Court usher had 300 livres per annum and no allowance. (1) The main duty of the clerks was to draw up the annual accounts and to prepare a report for the Company. The financial year ended in December and the directors insisted that the accounts for the previous year should be completed by the time the Company ships left the Isles for Europe in February or March. These rules were disregarded and when La Bourdonnais arrived in Ile de France he discovered that the Company had not received any account books for years. (2)

La Bourdonnais set out to improve the methods of book-keeping and in 1738 he sent a report on income and expenditure in Ile de France to the directors who had not received any accounts from the island for several years. (3) In the same year, probably on the recommendation of the Governor, a despatch from the Company, dated 1737, announced that the Council in Bourbon was to be allowed to close the accounts in October instead of December, in order that they might be ready when the ships arrived in the new year. In December, 1739, La Bourdonnais informed the Company that the accounts had been completed in both islands, yet when he left for France in 1740 the accounts for Bourbon were not forthcoming. In April, 1741, the directors wrote to the Superior Council in Bourbon: "La Compagnie...voit avec...peine que plus elle vous ordonne de mettre ses affaires en règle, et moins vous en faites." (4) In the following year they asked the administrators to forward the accounts for 1739. The accounts for 1742 and 1743 arrived in Paris in 1745. (5)

Finally, the Superior Councils were responsible for the administration of justice, proceedings being determined by three codes: the White Code, based on Parisian Civil Law and adapted to conditions in overseas settlements; the Ecclesiastical Code; the Black Code, which gave the colonists the right to act as magistrates in cases involving their own slaves. The edict of 1734 gave the Council of Ile de France equal standing with that in Bourbon and presumably either could act as a Court of Appeal if the Governor were presiding at the time. In criminal cases the presence of the Governor or a Director of Commerce was essential and sentence was pronounced by seven judges. Only five judges were required for civil cases but it seems that La Bourdonnais usually preferred to deal with these cases, at least in Ile de France, in his capacity as Governor. In the report of 1740 he wrote: "A l'égard de la justice, on ne peut rien ajouter à la façon dont elle est rendue. Pour le civil le Gouverneur doit être plutôt l'arbitre que le juge des differens. En 5 ans nous n'avons eu à l'île de France qu'un procès de cette espèce." (5)

(1) Recueil Trimestriel. Vol I. p. 507-508.

(2) Loughon. Correspondance. Vol II. Introduction. p. LX; Mémoire (1740) p. 46, Note 103. p. 182-183.

(3) Mémoire (1740) p. 46.

(4) Loughon. Correspondance. Vol III. The Company to the Superior Council of Bourbon. 5 April, 1741. p. 192-193.

(5) Ibid. Vol IV. Introduction. p. LIX; The Company to the Superior Council of Bourbon, 9 April, 1745. p. 207.

V. Government and Internal Security: The Maroons.

Public security in Ile de France and Bourbon was endangered by the presence of bands of maroons, or runaway slaves, who attacked the plantations and occasionally made massed attacks on the settlements. These desperate beings, who were usually tortured and burnt alive if they were captured, lived in the forests which covered both islands and it was extremely difficult to track them down. In Bourbon the problem was less acute since there was, by 1735, a well-established free population and a clearly defined agricultural system. In Ile de France, however, the free population was dangerously small and scattered; Abbé Gandon, who visited the island in 1732, described the tense atmosphere caused by the presence of these runaway slaves. No journey could be made without an escort and the colonists were afraid that a mass attack by the maroons would start a slave rebellion. The methods used to track them down were wholly unsuccessful. "Pendant notre séjour," he wrote, "on en fit un général de toute la garnison et de plusieurs matelots. Ils parcoururent pendant un mois toute l'île sans en trouver un... on croit qu'ils le savent toujours et qu'ils ont des espions parmi les noirs du Camp." (1) The maroons had attacked the Camp (the N.W. Port) in April, 1724, and in June of the same year the headquarters of the Company was transferred to the N.E. Port. (2) In 1735 it was estimated that there were more than 200 maroons in Bourbon and probably between 50 and 100 in Ile de France. (3)

In 1735 La Bourdonnais decided to use soldiers to track down the maroons in Ile de France. There were three infantry companies in the island and one of them was responsible for this duty, but the soldiers were not skilled in forest warfare and in 1736 La Bourdonnais asked the Superior Council of Bourbon for assistance. The colonists in Bourbon had long experience in dealing with runaway slaves and knew where to find their hideouts. The Superior Council had on previous occasions recruited men to serve for a limited period in Ile de France and in 1736 a group of twelve creoles volunteered to go to the island for a period of three or four months. In the following year the Governor tried to recruit a further fifty but the Superior Council claimed that the men were needed to hunt the maroons in Bourbon. The Councillors rightly suspected La Bourdonnais of encouraging men from Bourbon to settle in Ile de France. The men who arrived in 1736 were probably used to instruct the soldiers in forest tactics; they left Ile de France in the following year. (4)

In 1738 La Bourdonnais began to use detachments of faithful slaves to hunt down the maroons. He realised that they were the only members of the population used to hard work and discipline and, moreover, they understood the workings of the slave mind. In the report of 1740 he wrote: "C'est ce qui m'a déterminé à armer noirs contre noirs. J'en cherchai d'abord dix fidèles; je les ai envoyés à plusieurs reprises chercher les marons desquels ils ont presque toujours trouvé le camp et une fois entrés autres, quoiqu'ils ne fussent que cinq de ces noirs, ils attaquèrent leur camp, prirent leur second chef et deux négresses en vie." (5) This encounter took place in October, 1739. The second-in-command of the maroons was called sans Souci and he had lived in the forests for eleven years. He was broken on the wheel and burnt alive in the N.W. Port in November 1739. (6)

(1) Recueil Trimestriel. Vol V. Les Mascareignes vues par l'Abbé Gandon en 1732. p. 77.

(2) De Sornay. Ile de France. p. 34.

(3) Mémoire (1740) Note 42. p. 122.

(4) Ibid. Note 38-39. p. 120.

(5) Ibid. p. 14.

(6) Ibid. Note 40. p. 121-122.

Another detachment of twenty four slaves was formed in 1739 or early in 1740. They were given uniforms and the same pay and conditions of work as the Mufatta workmen from India. These 'noirs hussards', as they were called, patrolled the shore and constructed a number of look-out posts and small forts in the forests, "tellement que la crainte des Noirs hussards empêche les marons de camper, lesquels ne peuvent d'ailleurs vivre au bord de la mer que nos soldats gardent." The maroons were thus driven into the forests and deprived of fish, which was probably their main item of food. As a result of these measures La Bourdonnais was able to write: "Ils sont contraints d'être errans, et pâtissent beaucoup, ce qui les a accablé de fatigues et certainement les maladies en détruisent une grande quantité." (1) In 1740 La Bourdonnais estimated that there were not more than twenty male and twenty five female maroons alive in the island. (2) The 'noirs hussards' continued to exist during La Bourdonnais' second tour of duty and their number was increased to thirty six. In 1742 they were given 200 piastres for capturing a European soldier who had murdered a fellow soldier and their leader was freed. (3)

The maroons were not exterminated in Ile de France during the governorship of La Bourdonnais, but they were a nuisance rather than an actual menace. The slave population of the island increased rapidly after 1735 and the Malagasy slaves who formed the bulk of the newcomers were more difficult to control than were slaves from West Africa; some of them even managed to return to Madagascar on rafts which they had constructed in the island. By 1749 it would appear that the problem was more acute. In a letter to his relatives in France, Grant described the situation: "We have here a species of hunting...it is indeed of a cruel kind in appearance but absolutely necessary. It consists in pursuing maroon negroes or deserters in the woods and mountains where they are treated as wild beasts; they are shot whenever an opportunity offers and this severity is absolutely necessary for our preservation." (4)

In Bourbon a citizen militia had been formed prior to the arrival of La Bourdonnais to supervise the movement of slaves and to patrol the forests. When a gang of maroons was seen, a detachment of the militia was sent to comb the forests in that area. In each district the detachments were commanded by a captain and junior officers who were colonists with a military title. The officers did not receive regular pay, though the district association of slave-owners, the commune, paid 30 livres for each maroon taken dead or alive and the Company allowed one barrel of wine per annum for the captain and a half barrel for the junior officers. The remuneration was considered inadequate and the militia was usually badly organised and inefficient. (5) In March, 1738, the Superior Council decided to appoint a number of paid officials, with military titles, to supervise the tracking down of maroons and the new system was introduced in October. Captains were to receive 400 livres per annum and junior officers 200 livres. In the following year the Council introduced special allowances for forest duties. (6)

The problem of dealing with the maroons depended on the quality of citizen militia in Bourbon, and La Bourdonnais was particularly concerned about the fighting capacity of the colonists. In 1738 the Superior Council informed the Company that a detachment of creoles and 14 fusiliers had not dared to attack a gang of between 30 and 40 maroons, "qui n'avaient pour toutes armes à feu qu'un fusil et qu'un pistolet," (7)

(1) Mémoire (1740) p. 15.
 (2) Ibid. p. 15.
 (3) Loughnon. Correspondance. Vol IV. Introduction p. LXII, extrait du Régistre Général. 27 June, 1741. p. 15-16.
 (4) Grant. History of Mauritius (see bibliography) p. 297. A visitor to Ile de France in 1772, John Colpoys, stated that there were between 300-400 maroons in the island. Barnwell. Visits and Despatches. p. 154-168.
 (5) Mémoire (1740) Note 42. p. 122.
 (6) Ibid. p. 122-123.
 (7) Ibid. p. 122.

This incident well illustrates the complete lack of martial spirit among the colonists, who, according to La Bourdonnais, "mettent tout en usage pour être dispensés de prendre les armes et de venir aux revues... ceux qui ne peuvent avoir ce privilege sont regardés comme les hommes de la lie du peuple".⁽¹⁾ The Governor, therefore, advised the directors to stimulate public spirit by securing an increased number of commissions for colonists and by awarding medals for bravery. In addition, La Bourdonnais proposed the formation of a full-time force of 60 mounted men, maintained by the commune, "qui étant des hommes choisis et faisant point autre chose, parviendront à connaître parfaitement l'intérieur de l'île et détruisent sûrement les marons, et retiendront les autres noirs qui pourraient avoir des dispositions à le devenir tant qu'ils verront une garde aussi régulière."⁽²⁾

Operations against the maroons were so unsuccessful in 1739 and 1740 that in September of the latter year the Superior Council of Bourbon announced that a first class male slave would be granted on special credit terms for each maroon taken dead or alive. When La Bourdonnais returned to the Isles in 1741 he was of the belief that the apathy of the colonists would soon be overcome, since the directors had agreed to act on his recommendations. In the same year the Company awarded a medal to an inhabitant of Bourbon named François Caron, "qui se distingue à la poursuite des noirs marons."⁽³⁾ When La Bourdonnais sailed for India in 1741 some 80 volunteers from Bourbon sailed with the squadron. Encouraged by this response he organised the colonists into special groups on his return: "gendarmes, dragons, grenadiers, bons habitants... des lâches ou des paresseux, et de ceux qui sont portés de mauvaise volonté pour la défense de leur patrie."⁽⁴⁾ A number of planters received military titles and in 1744 a commanding officer, de Fontbrune, was appointed to direct the activities of the various detachments of the militia. But despite all La Bourdonnais' efforts, the enthusiasm and spirit of the colonists remained at a low ebb and operations against the maroons continued to be unsuccessful.

(1) Mémoire (1740) Note 42. p.67.

(2) Ibid. p.15.

(3) Loughon. Correspondance. Vol IV. Extrait du Régistre Général. 27 June, 1741. p.28.

(4) Ibid. Vol V. Introduction. p. XXXVIII.

V. Government and Internal Security: The Troops.

Internal order and defence against aggression depended ultimately on the maintenance of French troops in the two islands. In the early eighteenth century a citizen militia had been established in Bourbon but since this body was voluntary and untrained its effectiveness was severely limited. The Creoles disliked military service and they rarely took part in the exercises organised by the Superior Council. In Ile de France La Bourdonnais formed two mixed companies of colonists and workmen, who attended a parade on the first Sunday of each month, "où on leur apprend les évolutions, afin qu'en cas d'occasion ils puissent faire corps avec les troupes." (1) It is, however, safe to assume that in an emergency such as a slave revolt or an attack by a foreign power, the local militia would have proved totally inadequate.

In 1727 there were four companies of troops in the Isles, two in Bourbon and two in Ile de France. At that time each company was meant to have a complement of 50 officers and men but the effective strength was considerably less owing to the high mortality rate among soldiers on the voyage out from France (2) and to deaths and desertions in the Isles. The four companies, which probably had a total strength of less than 120 officers and men, were found to be quite inadequate for the duties of defence, supervision of the movement of slaves and cooperation with the militia in hunting down maroons, harbour duties and service aboard the slave ships. The garrison in each island was under the command of an officer with the title of Lieutenant au Roi, who was usually at odds with the administrators. In 1729 the office was abolished in Ile de France and five years later in Bourbon, and under the new system, the troops came under the command of the Governor of the Isles.

In 1731 the directors announced that the strength of a company was to be increased from 50 to 70 officers and men and that an extra company was to proceed to the Isles. At this time the garrison in Bourbon consisted of 64 officers and men, but one third of this number were required as guards aboard the slave ships. The figures for Ile de France are not known but it is probable that the numbers were even lower. When the additional troops reached Ile de France they were kept in the island and thus for two years the garrison in Bourbon remained dangerously low. In 1734 the directors sent out 4 infantry companies and the distribution of troops between the two islands was modified. Bourbon was allotted 3 companies, each with a strength of 86 officers and men, while Ile de France received a company of 74 officers and men. (3) When La Bourdonnais was appointed Governor the distribution of troops was again modified. Ile de France was allotted 3 companies and Bourbon 2 companies. In 1735 the strength of a company was fixed at 86 officers and men and two years later it was increased to 100. (4)

The discipline of the troops was a constant source of anxiety both to the directors and the local administrators. Soldiers were usually drawn from the poorest and most unstable section of the population, service overseas was unpopular and pay was shockingly inadequate. (5)

(1) Mémoire (1740) p. 5.

(2) Loughn. Anciens Voyages. p. 215.

(3) Mémoire (1740) Note 6. p. 34.

(4) Loughn. Correspondance. Vol II. Introduction. p. XXXVI.

(5) Privates received 144 livres per annum; drummers, fife-players and corporals, 180 livres; sergeants, 216 livres; ensigns, 540 livres; second-lieutenants, 600 livres; lieutenants, 720 livres; captains, 1000 - 1200. Officers received wine and brandy allowances. Recueil Trimestriel, Vol I. p. 507-508.

In the early seventeen thirties the troops in Bourbon were fairly well disciplined since they were heavily outnumbered by the colonists and, moreover, since they were fully occupied for the greater part of the year. In October, 1734, several officers in the garrison in Bourbon decided to resign in protest against a ruling of the Company which stated that they had no special authority over the colonists, but some months later they agreed to remain in the service. (1) In Ile de France, however, discipline was very lax and there were constant quarrels between civil and military authorities. Life in the colony was hard and the troops often spent from two to three months of each year foraging in the forests. In 1727 four soldiers deserted and became maroons and in February, 1733, thirty soldiers deserted. The Governor, de Maupin, agreed to meet the men's complaints and they were offered an amnesty. (2) In the following year a more serious mutiny broke out and over half the garrison deserted. Finally they agreed to come to terms and the ringleaders were executed. In the report of 1740 La Bourdonnais described the situation when he arrived: "Elles se sont révoltées plusieurs fois et ont poussé l'insolence jusqu'à arborer pavillon hollandaise et faire capituler le commandant de l'Ile. De là juges des désordres d'une soldatesque sans discipline. Elle se faisait craindre de tout le monde, même de quelques officiers." (3)

When La Bourdonnais was appointed Governor he was ordered to punish, "avec la dernière sévérité ceux qui s'écarteront de l'obéissance et du respect dû au gouvernement et aux officiers qui les commandent et prévendra avec une vigilance extrême tout sujet et mouvement de sédition en faisant des exemples de punition de s premiers auxquels on aura quelque chose à reprocher sur cet article..." (4) He was furnished with special powers for dealing with insubordination, but excessive severity was not needed and order and discipline were eventually re-established. Ile de France became an important refitting and re-arming centre and the troops were kept fully occupied, supervising the loading and unloading of ships, serving aboard the slave ships, patrolling the coast, manning the look-out stations, hunting down maroons and training the colonists in the use of firearms. In 1740 La Bourdonnais informed Orry that the troops were, "dans une subordination si parfaite que dès que l'on a besoin pour le travail publique ils y marchent avec toute la docilité possible." (5) La Bourdonnais probably over-emphasised the success of his policy in Ile de France, although there is no direct evidence for this. In Bourbon it would appear that the troops were rather more troublesome at this time; in 1738 the administrators informed the Company that the soldiers were, "des Bas-Bretons et qui conséquemment n'ont que la face d'hommes, ou se sont de jeunes libertins, engagés la plupart dans les prisons ou à Bicetres, qui dénués de tous sentiments d'éducation, de religion et dévoués à un libertinage affreux, ne sont capables que de faire mal." (6)

When La Bourdonnais returned to France in 1740 he asked the Company to send additional troops to the Isles. Owing to the disturbed condition of Europe and the fear that hostilities might spread to India the directors acceded to his request and in 1741 he returned to Ile de France with four infantry companies and a company of artillery. On arrival he found that many of the troops in the garrison had been sent to the relief of Pondicherry. He decided to sail for India and it appears that three infantry companies, with a total complement of 17 officers and 282 men, took part in the expedition. The troops returned in 1742 but they were not intended for the permanent establishment and during the next twelve

(1) Lagnon. Correspondance. Vol II Introduction. p. XXXVI.

(2) Mémoire (1740) Note 7. p. 85.

(3) Ibid. p. 4.

(4) Mémoire (1750) P. J. p. 4.

(5) Mémoire (1740) p. 5.

(6) Lagnon. Correspondance. Vol II. The Superior Council of Bourbon to the Company. 24 February, 1738. p. 128.

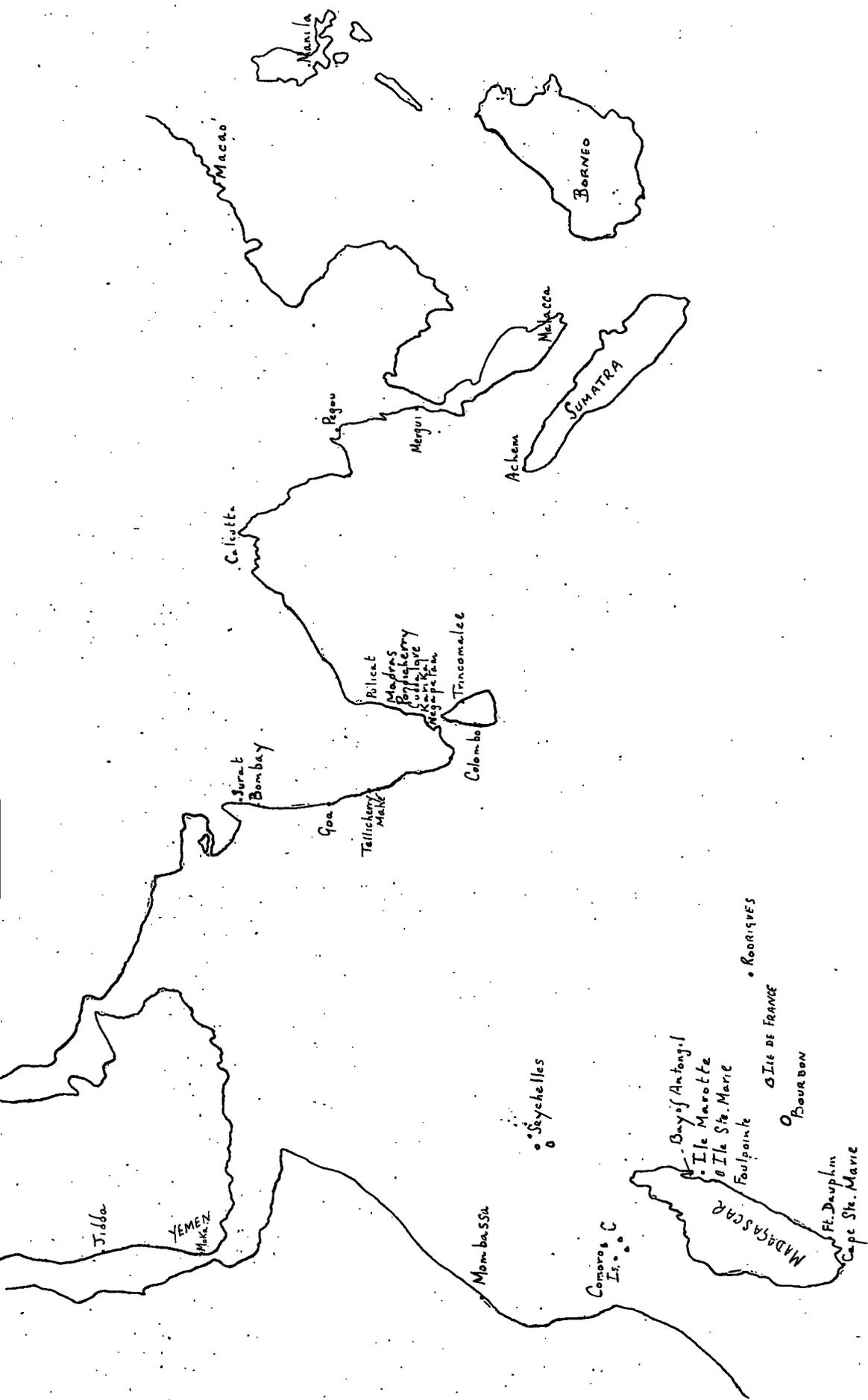
months four infantry companies left the Isles. (1)

After the departure of these troops there were, from 1742 to 1746, five infantry companies and one company of artillery stationed in the Isles; two in Bourbon and four in Île de France. In 1743 the directors ordered de Rostaing, who was in charge of the artillery company, to proceed to India with two thirds of his men but he ignored the instructions. (2) La Bourdonnais, realising that the troops were not sufficient for the defence of the Isles, introduced legislation in August, 1742, for the compulsory military training of the colonists, but the scheme does not appear to have fired the enthusiasm of the planters and when in 1746 he asked for volunteers for an expedition to India the response was negligible and he was forced to strip the Isles of troops.

(1) Lagnon. Correspondance. Vol IV. Introduction. p. LIX-LXIII. Troops wounded at Mahé received a special gratification.

(2) Ibid. Extrait du Régistre Général. II April, 1744. p. 164-165; Mémoire (1740) Note 130. p. 192.

THE INDIAN OCEAN. 1735-46



In November 1738 La Bourdonnais asked for permission to return to France. He had lost his son in February of the same year and in the following May his wife died in childbirth. Criticism of his work as Governor-General had increased. Charpentier de Cossigny, who had returned to Ile de France in 1736, described the recently erected buildings in the North-West port as unsightly, temporary and amateurish and during his second tour as Engineer-in-Chief, from 1736-1739, he bombarded Orry and Orry de Fulvy with libellous reports about the incompetence of La Bourdonnais (1). Captains of ships in the 'première navigation' accused the Governor-General of failing to provide sufficient food for their needs and some complained that they had been forced to buy their provisions in St. Helena. In 1737 La Bourdonnais insisted that all captains should sign certificates containing lists of the amount of food they had received but since there were frequent shortages in Ile de France the captains continued to complain. They also resented the power of the Governor-General to transfer newly arrived sailors to the island squadron. La Bourdonnais gave bounties to sailors, who remained in Ile de France but occasionally he used force. Ships' captains were extremely displeased when they lost experienced sailors in this way. Furthermore, in 1737 a group of colonists from Bourbon presented a petition to the directors in Paris demanding an enquiry into the administration of corvée duties in the island.

In 1739 the brother of La Bourdonnais, Mahé de la Villebague, who was a member of the Superior Council in Pondicherry, arrived in Ile de France and persuaded his brother to continue in office for another year. Dumas, the Governor of Pondicherry had asked the directors for leave and de la Villebague seems to have been fairly confident that La Bourdonnais would be chosen as his successor. The office of Governor-General of Bourbon and Ile de France was regarded as a stepping-off post for a command in India and it was believed in Pondicherry at the time that La Bourdonnais would be selected by the directors for the governorship of the town. There can be little doubt that de la Villebague returned to France in order to secure the post for his brother. (2).

De la Villebague left Ile de France in 1739. Meanwhile the directors continued to receive complaints about the administration of La Bourdonnais. He was accused of exacting illegal corvées and of encouraging smuggling (3). On 20 March, 1739, he wrote to the Controller-General, Orry, "Je défie la plus noire calomnie de me prouver que j'ai fait quelque chose qui puisse avoir fait tort d'une obole à la Compagnie. Il me reste à vous supplier de m'accorder un congé ou de me retirer de cette île." (4). In the Mémoire (1740) he described the unpleasant atmosphere in Ile de France, "Ce n'est plus M. Dumas qui les tyrannise. C'est M. Dumont et moi, un autre viendra, ce sera lui, il en sera toujours de même si on ne reprime pas l'esprit de cabale et de calomnie qui règne dans cette île par des discours empoisonnés de trois ou quatre mauvaises têtes qui répandent le venin partout." (5).

(1). Crépin. La Bourdonnais. p. 95-II2.

(2) Cultru. Dupleix. p. 172. Dupleix to Dulaurens. 5 December. 1739. "Il avait la protection de Fulvy, qui le couvrait contre vents et marées, et l'on était dans le siècle des choses surprenantes."

(3) Mémoire (1740) Note II2 p. 184.

(4) St. Eline le Duc. Ile de France. MSS. in Carnegie library Curepipe p. 73.

(5) Mémoire (1740) quoted by Crépin. La Bourdonnais. p. 116.

On 8 February, 1740, the *fière* arrived from France, ^{with news} that war had broken out in the Caribbean between England and Spain. La Bourdonnais realised that the war might easily spread to Europe and he immediately made preparations to leave Ile de France. He announced his decision to the Superior Council on the same day and on 20 March, 1740, he sailed for Bourbon on the *Prince de Conti*. The ship left Bourbon on 5 April and on 24 July she arrived in Lorient. During the voyage La Bourdonnais wrote a detailed account of his administration in Bourbon and Ile de France, the *Mémoire des Iles*, which he presented to the Controller-General. The report is divided into three sections. In the first and longest section he described the work he had accomplished in the two islands; the second section was a reply to criticisms of his administration; in the third section he outlined a policy for the future administration of Ile de France and Bourbon. The report contains a request for a transfer to another command. "Je préférerais une vie privée," wrote La Bourdonnais, "à un poste aussi rempli d'ennemies fâcheux." (1).

When he arrived in Paris La Bourdonnais found, "une prévention étonnante dans tous les esprits. Les ministres, La Compagnie, le public en un mot, tout le monde paraît le regarder de mauvais oeil." (2) He obtained audiences with Cardinal Fleury, Philibert Orry and Maurepas, the Minister of the Marine. His patron, Orry de Fulvy, was in Brittany at this time and it would appear that the final decision about his future was taken by de Fulvy who was the Inspector-General of the Company, a royal commissioner and the most powerful member of the council of directors. (3).

Shortly after the arrival of La Bourdonnais a pamphlet which had been written by a colonist named Bellecourt (4) was printed and circulated in Paris. The author accused La Bourdonnais of selling merchandise and slaves to the colonists at prices which exceeded those authorized by the Company and of employing slaves who had been sent by planters for corvée duty for his own private use. The libel also stated that he had illegally altered the value of coins sent out by the Company for his own private profit.

La Bourdonnais prepared a reply and in January, 1741, a pamphlet, dedicated to Cardinal de Fleury, was published in which he examined the charges and produced evidence that he had not engaged in fraudulent practices (5). He pointed out that the Company possessed records of the imports of slaves and merchandise and detailed lists of their distribution in Bourbon and Ile de France which would prove that he had not charged excessive prices. With regard to corvée duties he stated that since he did not possess any land in Bourbon it was impossible to accuse him of using slaves sent for corvée duty for his own personal use. (6). He admitted that he had issued orders to change the value of 2 sou pieces to 3 sous but this policy had not brought him any financial gain. In 1737 the Company had sent 20,000 livres in coins marked at 2 sous to the islands, where coin was always in short supply, because merchandise was bought from passing ships and each year large sums of money left the islands. La Bourdonnais explained that he had tried to remedy this situation by issuing coins at a face value of three sous. The coins were therefore unacceptable to ships' captains because they were worth only 2 sous in France. Finally, La Bourdonnais described the work he had

(1) *Mémoire* (1740) p. 61.

(2) *Mémoire* (1750) p. 17.

(3) *Ibid.* p. 18.

(4) Bellecourt had served as an officer in Ile de France. In 1726 he was sentenced to the galleys for libel against a priest. The judgement was reversed and he settled in Bourbon but he was later expelled for forgery. He was sent to the Bastille and finally exiled. Crépin, 132-3.

(5) La Bourdonnais. "Lettre écrite à son Eminence Monseigneur le Cardinal de Fleury. Mauritius Archives. Box Y2/23. Photostat copy from Archives

(6) It is possible that La Bourdonnais did use slaves, who Nationales. had been sent to do corvée duties, for private building schemes in which he has a personal interest.

accomplished as Governor-General of the two islands.

Meanwhile war had broken out in Europe. In December, 1740, Frederick the Great invaded Silesia. Cardinal de Fleury was an old man of eighty-five; he was dominated by the leader of the war party, Belle-Isle, and Orry probably thought that as soon as Frederick had secured a clear victory over Austria, France would join in the war on the side of Prussia. England was already at war with Spain and it was expected that she would make an alliance with Austria. There was every indication that relations between England and France would deteriorate even though war was not openly declared. Two months before Frederick invaded Silesia La Bourdonnais had submitted a report to Maurepas in which he advised the government to send a squadron of ships to India to defend the Isles and the Indian factories in the event of war between France and England (1). When war broke out between Prussia and Austria La Bourdonnais himself prepared a plan to take a squadron to India. He believed that France and England would be drawn into the struggle and he knew that a small squadron could do untold damage to English shipping. "Il est évident," he wrote, "que si la guerre se déclare, je ferai la plus grand coup qu'on ait jamais fait sur la mer." (2)

The plan became a reality when, according to La Bourdonnais, "quelques amis vinrent lui proposer d'armer suivant son projet, et que, pour faciliter l'entreprise, ils lui offrirent cinq millions à condition qu'il entrerait pour un dixième dans l'intérêt de l'armement." (3) La Bourdonnais agreed to take the squadron to India and to attack English shipping and factories if war broke out. He proposed to send all captured bullion to the Company in France and to sell captured merchandise in the South Seas. (4) The proceeds from the sale of this merchandise were to be exchanged for gold in China and when the needs of the colonists in Bourbon and Ile de France had been satisfied he proposed to return to France. If, however, war did not break out he planned to use the squadron for carrying Company merchandise from India. (5)

The French government decided to support the scheme and on 16 January, 1741, La Bourdonnais was offered the command of a squadron composed of two royal frigates and four Indiamen. The expedition was thus no longer a private project but a joint enterprise on the part of the government and the Company. Surprisingly enough the directors do not appear to have taken part in the private talks between La Bourdonnais, Orry, Maurepas and Fleury (6). The directors were under the assumption that the French and English companies would negotiate private treaties of neutrality if war broke out between the two countries. Moreover, several of them were personal enemies of La Bourdonnais, who realised that it would be extremely dangerous to take a squadron to India if the board of directors was opposed to the scheme. When they were finally informed that the government agreed to support the expedition and that Orry and de Fulvy had committed the Company to contribute four ships, "ils annonçaient partout cet armement comme propre à ruiner la Compagnie, parce qu'il devait inutilement occuper les vaisseaux, lui coûter beaucoup et, lui rien produire." (7)

In February, 1741, Orry discussed the scope of the expedition with the directors of the Company and persuaded them to cooperate with La Bourdonnais. In the same month the latter wrote a letter to the

(1) Roubaud La Bourdonnais. Rapport sur l'état actuel de nos colonies et de notre navigation. 27 October, 1740. p. 96-98.

(2) Mémoire (1750) p. 22.

(3) Ibid. p. 22.

(4) Mémoire (1740) p. 77-78. La Bourdonnais believed that the Philippines would prove an excellent market for French goods.

(5) Ibid. p. 22. Mémoire (1750) p. 22.

(6) Ibid. p. 22-24.

(7) Ibid. p. 24.

directors explaining that he had accepted the command because the Controller-General had ordered him to lead the expedition. He described the assignment as, "une carrière qui par la situation des esprits devient trop épineuse!" (1) La Bourdonnais was granted a commission as captain of the royal frigate Mars and in this capacity he was answerable only to the King. He was given extensive powers: "à l'égard des forces de mer il doit dans tous les cas les commander--qu'au cas l'action se passât dans quelque autre gouvernement que celui des Iles les Conseils l'auraient préalablement autorisés à donner les ordres à terre." A sealed envelope containing secret instructions was entrusted to La Bourdonnais. He was to open it only if war broke out. (2)

La Bourdonnais supervised the fitting out of the ships which the Company had agreed to contribute and he remained in Lorient for about six weeks. Four ships of the 'première navigation', the Fleury, the Brillant, the Aimable and the Renommée and a smaller ship, the Parfaite, were equipped. (3) The two royal frigates, the Mars, the flagship of La Bourdonnais, and the Griffon, were refitting at Brest but unfortunately at the last moment the government decided to withdraw the ships. On 5 April the five ships of the Company sailed from Lorient. La Bourdonnais chose the Fleury as his flagship.

This expedition could only have succeeded if war had been declared between France and England within the following twelve months. The English did not have a naval squadron in the East at this time and therefore the French squadron would have had control of the Indian Ocean for at least a year. Rich prizes would have been captured and a severe blow would have been struck at English Naval power. But war did not break out until 1744. La Bourdonnais had informed the directors that if the peace lasted he would use the squadron for carrying merchandise from India but this was a small return for the immense cost of equipping the squadron. The cost of adapting merchantmen for naval warfare was very heavy and La Bourdonnais' ships carried crews totalling 1,200 men and an additional 500 soldiers (4). Thus La Bourdonnais left Lorient with five ships belonging to the East India Company and, although his expedition had the approval of the French government, the directors of the Company which, in fact, bore the expenses of the squadron, were violently opposed to the scheme.

The expedition sailed for South America and in May the ships anchored off Ile Grande on the coast of Brazil. La Bourdonnais drilled his troops and the crews of the ships. In June he sailed for Ile de France in the Fleury together with the Brillant and the Aimable. The Renommée remained in Ile Grande to await the Parfaite which had been blown off its course. The squadron reached Port Louis on 14 August, 1741. La Bourdonnais was disconcerted to find that most of the troops in Ile de France and Bourbon had been sent to Pondicherry to help defend the town from a threatened attack by the Marattas. (5)

In India the Moghul empire was in a state of dissolution. The provincial rulers had become independent and from 1730 onwards the Marattas who controlled the western districts of India were gradually increasing their hold on central India. In 1739 a number of Hindu princes in the Carnatic, alarmed by Mohammedan expansion in southern India, opened negotiations with the Marattas. The Nawab of the Carnatic, Sadutoolla Khan, died in 1732 and he was succeeded by his nephew, Dost Ali Khan. In 1735 the Hindu Rajah of Trichinopoly died without leaving an heir. His widow appealed to the Nawab for help and in 1736 the army

(1). Mémoire (1750) p. 25-26.

(2) Ibid. p. 57. The secret instructions are printed in the Mémoire (1750), Extrait des ordres du Ministre. 16 January, 1741. "Il est expressement défendu au Sieur de La Bourdonnais de s'emparer d'aucun établissement ou comptoir des ennemis pour le conserver".

(3) Loughson. Correspondance Vol III. p. 3. Extrait du Régistre-Général. 27^e une, 1741. Fleury (800 tons) Brillant (700 tons) Renommée (400 tons) Parfaite (160 tons)

(4) Ibid. Vol II. Introduction p. XXXVII. p. 10

(5) Ibid. Vol III. Introduction. p. XXXVI. 17 officers and 282 men were sent to Pondicherry.

of Dost Ali Khan, led by his son, Sufder Ali, and his son-in-law, Chanda Sahib, siezed Trichinopoly. They promised to return the town to the Ranees but once in possession of it they imprisoned her. Two years later the death of the Hindu ruler of Tagore, Tockagee, led to a disputed succession. His legitimate son, Sahoojee, negotiated with Dumas, Governor of Pondicherry, and promised to cede Karical in return for military assistance but when the French attempted to take possession of the town they found that Sahoojee was unwilling to part with it. The army of Chunda Sahib, which was led by a Spaniard called Francisco Pereira, captured Trichinopoly and handed it over to the French. Shortly afterwards Sahoojee was deposed and his successor, Pertab Singh, agreed to confirm the cession.

The Marattas agreed to assist the lesser Hindu princes of the Carnatic and in October, 1739, an army of 50,000 men led by the son of the Maratta king advanced on Arcot, the capital of the Carnatic. Dost Ali Khan was strongly entrenched in the hilly country near Arcot but one of his generals allowed the Maratta army to march through a pass which he was supposed to guard and in May, 1740, the Nawab and his son, Hassan Ali, were killed. Dumas was a personal friend of the Nawab, who had persuaded the Moghul to grant a firman giving the French the right to mint gold and silver rupees, and after the battle the widow of Dost Ali Khan, with her family and attendants, took refuge in Pondicherry. Her son, Sufder Ali, however, concluded a treaty with the Marattas by which he was recognised as Nawab of the Carnatic in return for the payment of tribute.

The fortifications of Pondicherry were strengthened and Dumas formed an army of 4,500 Indians. There were only 500 European soldiers and sailors in the town but French civilians were given arms. A ship was sent to bring reinforcements from Ile de France and Bourbon. In September, 1740, Sufder Ali and Chanda Sahib visited Pondicherry and persuaded their relatives to leave the city. Shortly afterwards the Marattas sent an ultimatum to Dumas and when this was rejected the surrounding countryside was devastated. Portonovo and the outskirts of Cuddalore were sacked. A second army was then sent to Pondicherry but when he saw the military preparations in the town he advised a postponement of the attack. Chunda Sahib, who was besieged in Trichinopoly, agreed to surrender in March, 1741, and after the fall of the city the Marattas withdrew westwards.

When La Bourdonnais heard that Pondicherry was in danger he decided to set sail for India. He issued orders to the Councils of Ile de France and Bourbon to strengthen the defenses of the two islands (1) and on the 22 August he sailed from Bourbon arriving in Pondicherry on 30 September. He found that the Marattas had withdrawn from the country surrounding the town and that a peace treaty had already been signed. Dumas, however, informed him that the factory at Mahe on the Malabar coast was besieged by a native army. La Bourdonnais decided to take his squadron to Mahe and on 22 October he left Pondicherry, two days after Dupleix had taken over the governorship of the town (2).

During the voyage La Bourdonnais drilled his troops in preparation for the operations on land and on 23 November he anchored off Mahe. He found the native army strongly entrenched in forts and protected by a marsh which lay between their position and the French factory. He planned to build an artillery battery at the edge of the Marsh and shortly after his arrival he ordered trenches to be dug opposite one of the enemy gun positions. When the rest of the squadron arrived the troops on board were disembarked and sent into the trenches. On 3 December, under cover of darkness, four guns were set up near the enemy lines. On the following day the Indian troops attacked the French gun position. They were driven off and later the French counter-attacked and two enemy forts were captured. During the engagement French casualties were 56 killed and

(1) Loughon Correspondance, Vol III. The Company to the Superior Council of Bourbon, 15 February, 1743. p.129.

(2) Memoire (1750) p.28.

120 wounded. The engagement was decisive and in February, 1742, a treaty was signed which confirmed the French pepper monopoly and additional territory was ceded to the Company. (1) La Bourdonnais appears to have sailed from Mahé in January, 1742. He arrived in Ile de France in March of the same year and waited confidently for the news that war had broken out.

The cost of maintaining this fleet in the Indian Ocean was very heavy and in November, 1741, the directors persuaded Orry to send instructions to La Bourdonnais to disarm the ships and send them back to France. (2) The letter probably arrived in Ile de France in May or June of 1742. La Bourdonnais was evidently expecting these orders because he had sent two ships, the *Parfaite* and the *Renommée* to carry slaves from Mozambique and Madagascar. When the orders arrived he sent the *Fleury* and the *Brillant* to India with instructions to bring cargoes of merchandise to the Isles. (3)

In August, 1742, La Bourdonnais received a private letter from Orry authorizing him to keep two of the ships. (4) Orry was of the opinion that war was now inevitable. Relations between France and England had continued to deteriorate; in January, 1742, the French candidate, Charles Albert of Bavaria, had been elected Emperor and in the following month Walpole had resigned. It appears that on receipt of this news La Bourdonnais sailed to Bourbon where, on 13 August, he addressed a letter to the councils of both islands. His plan envisaged the use of the islands as bases for privateering operations and he stated that he required 1500 men and he promised a generous division of prizes. The plan, however, did not materialise and shortly afterwards the *Fleury*, the *Brillant* and the *Aimable* returned to France.

The expedition of 1741 was a gamble which did not succeed. If war had broken out between France and England La Bourdonnais' squadron would have controlled the Indian Ocean for at least twelve months. An uneasy peace, however, was maintained between the two countries until 1744 and therefore the squadron accomplished nothing. The total cost of the expedition, including the loss of two ships which had been ordered to assist the squadron, was 12,000,000 livres. The cost of fitting out the squadron was over 5,000,000 livres and this represented a pure loss to the Company. The fact that a French fleet had sailed to India in 1741 induced the English government to follow suit and three years later when war was declared an English fleet appeared in the Indian Ocean and carried out a number of successful attacks on French shipping. From July, 1744, to October, 1745, the Company lost twelve ships which had cost a total of 10,500,000 livres to build and equip. Moreover, the position of the Company was weakened. In 1743 the directors sent 4,442,314 livres to India to purchase merchandise, whereas in normal years they sent from 10-12,000,000 livres and they ordered Dupleix to cut down expenses and to suspend all building operations. (6)

The members of the government and the directors of the Company expressed their satisfaction with the results of the campaign in Mahé (7) but experienced administrators in India realised that the expedition had been a failure. In December, 1742, Dumas wrote to Dupleix: "Se regarde la guerre de Mahé comme un événement des plus fâcheux qui aient pu arriver à la Compagnie car outre les sommes considérables qu'elle lui coûte déjà cela la jette dans la nécessité d'y entretenir une très forte garnison pendant longtemps." (8) Oddly enough it was the colonists in

(1) Mémoire (1750) p.29-31; Recueil Trimestriel. Vol III. Rapport de La Bourdonnais sur son voyage--à Mahé en 1741. F.334-392.

(2) Ibid. P.4-5.

(3) Loughon. Correspondance. Vol IV. Introduction. p. xix.

(4) Mémoire (1750) Orry to La Bourdonnais. August 1742. p.34.

(5) Recueil Trimestriel. Vol I. Lettres au Conseil. p. 493-503.

(6) Cultru. Dupleix. p.74, 80.

(7) Loughon. Correspondance. Vol IV. Extrait du Régistre-Général. 19 June, 1743. p.109

(8) Cultru. Dupleix. p.95.

Bourbon who benefitted from the expedition to Mahe. Twenty four creoles had volunteered to serve with La Bourdonnais and in 1743 the Company agreed to maintain coffee prices at five sous a pound for a further period of two years in recognition of the, "zele et l'empressement avec lequel la plupart des habitants.....se sont portes à abandonner leurs habitations pour aller au secours de Pondicherry." (1)

La Bourdonnais resumed his duties as Governor in March, 1742. He promoted ship building and the cultivation of cash crops in Ile de France and he encouraged the colonists to form trading companies but he was determined to leave the islands as soon as circumstances permitted. After the departure of the three Company ships he asked Orry to accept his resignation but the Controller-General persuaded him to remain at his post and in December, 1742, La Bourdonnais was informed that he was to take over the government of Pondicherry par interim in the event of the illness or death of Dupleix. (2) In March, 1744, Orry wrote: "Je sens que d'une part le principal mobile qui vous avait determine à repasser dans les Indes qui etait de diriger des forces, tant pour defendre les etablissemens de la Compagnie, que pour faire les entreprises si l'occasion s'en presentait, vous demanderez pourquoi l'on ne vous permet pas votre retour; mais... on y aurait d'autant plus de besoin d'un homme de ressource qui sut se retourner et faire un usage avantageux du peu qu'il a.... D'ailleurs la bonne opinion que j'ai de vous m'ayant determine à vous destiner le premier poste de l'Inde, s'il arrivait quelque chose à M. Dupleix, elle m'engage à vous considerer comme un homme non seulement utile mais même necessaire." (3)

The frigate Kiere arrived in Port Louis in September, 1744, with news that France had declared war on England in March of the same year. The ship carried a dispatch however, from the directors of the Company dated 14 April, 1744, forbidding La Bourdonnais to engage in hostilities against the English although he was authorized to keep two ships to guard the islands in the event of an attack. (4) The directors continued in their belief that the two companies would negotiate local treaties of neutrality and that trade would continue.

This was the news that La Bourdonnais had been waiting to hear for three years. He knew that he could flout the orders of the Company to preserve a strict neutrality because his protector, De Fulvy, and possibly Orry himself, wanted to use Ile de France as a base for special operations. (5) La Bourdonnais had planned to make an attack on the English factory at Madras as early as 1740 and he had discussed the scheme with Lumas, Paradis (6) and Dupleix in 1741. As soon as he heard that war had broken out he informed Dupleix that he could requisition six ships and enlist from 1500-1800 men and use them for a special enterprise, the profits of which were to be divided between the Company, Dupleix and himself. (8) He replied to the Company despatch of 11 April pointing out that Commodore Barnett, who was in command of an English squadron which had arrived in the Indian Ocean in 1744, would not respect a treaty of neutrality which had been negotiated by two commercial companies.

In December, 1744, Dupleix informed La Bourdonnais that the local agreements to preserve neutrality would probably be honoured but early in 1745 he heard that the English squadron had arrived in the Indian Ocean

(1) Loughon. Correspondance. Vol IV. The Company to the Superior Council of Bourbon. 15 February, 1743. p. 129.

(2) Memoire (1750) Orry to La Bourdonnais. 5 December, 1742 p. 37; Orry to the Superior Council of Pondicherry 18 February, 1743. p. 5-6.

(3) Ibid. PJ. Orry to La Bourdonnais. 7 March. 1744. p. 6-7.

(4) Ibid. p. 35.

(5) Ibid. PJ. Orry to La Bourdonnais. 7 March, 1744. p. 7.; La Bourdonnais to Dupleix 17 July, 1746. p. 40.

(6) At that time Paradis was a senior official in Pondicherry.

(7) Caltru. Dupleix. La Bourdonnais to Dupleix. 12 September, 1744. p. 291.

and shortly afterwards the Superior Council of Madras intimated that it could not influence the actions of an officer in the Royal Navy. There were at that time several ships trading with Manilla, Mozambique and China in which Dupleix had a commercial interest and he realised that his losses would probably be considerable. He therefore decided to cooperate with La Bourdonnais; on 15 January, 1745, he wrote to the latter promising to invest 15,000 rupees in a privateering expedition. Faradis, the officer in charge at Karikal, had visited Madras in 1741 and drawn plans of the town and it appears that Dupleix forwarded them to La Bourdonnais. (1) In March and April, 1745, four ships, engaged in private commerce in the Indian Ocean, three of them with China and the fourth with Sumatra, were captured by the English. One of the ships was engaged in a trading venture organised by La Bourdonnais and it seems that Dupleix had a major interest in the cargoes of the remaining three. On 1 May, 1745, La Bourdonnais wrote to Dupleix, intimating that a privateering expedition was essential: "C'était le seul moyen," he wrote, "de nous dédommager de nos pertes." (2)

Although Dupleix was prepared to take advantage of the disturbed state of affairs in India and to invest in an unofficial attack on Madras he was nevertheless fully aware of the fact that the English squadron might attack Pondicherry. The directors had ordered him to suspend all building operations in the town in 1743 but he had disobeyed the order and continued to fortify the town. This work, however, was still incomplete and he was as yet unwilling to commit himself wholeheartedly to an enterprise which might have serious consequences. Moreover, the unsettled state of the Carnatic rendered the position of the French in Pondicherry precarious in the extreme. In September, 1742, Sudder Ali had been murdered and his brother-in-law proclaimed Nawab of the Carnatic. A few months later the army mutinied; the son son of Sudder Ali was proclaimed Nawab and the Subador of the Deccan appointed a guardian to keep order in the province. The latter died before he could assume his duties and a general, Anwarodeen, was sent to administer the Carnatic. Shortly afterwards the Nawab was murdered and Anwarodeen was appointed his successor. Early in 1745 Dupleix asked the new Nawab to announce publicly that he would regard an attack on the French factories as an act of aggression against himself. In addition, an appeal for help was sent to Ile de France. (3)

La Bourdonnais prepared to sail for India. He requisitioned four ships and collected supplies. (4) The *Insulaire*, a frigate which had been built in Port Louis, was refitted as a warship. Food was rationed in the island and since few of the colonists were willing to serve in the squadron the planters in Bourbon were ordered to supply one twentieth of their male slaves for service aboard the ships. This unpopular measure was found to be unnecessary, however, because a cargo of slaves from Senegal arrived in Ile de France and from 200-300 of them were purchased for the Company for the expedition. In May, 1745, the squadron was ready to sail but La Bourdonnais decided to wait for the Indiamen to arrive from France in order to convoy them to India. Owing to the shortage of food in Ile de France he set three ships to Madagascar with orders to remain there until August by which time the Company ships were expected to have arrived in Port Louis. (5)

On 28 July the frigate, *Expédition*, arrived from France with despatches from Orry. La Bourdonnais was informed that a squadron of five ships, the *Achille*, the *St. Louis*, the *Lys*, the *Phœnix* and the *Duc d'Orléans* would arrive in the island in October. The ships were carrying bullion and La Bourdonnais was ordered to convoy the squadron to

(1) Cultru. Dupleix. p. 201.

(2) Ibid. p. 202.

(3) Mémoire (1750) RJ. Superior Council of Pondicherry to La Bourdonnais. 15 January, 1745. p. 14-15.

(4) The ships were the *Bourbon*, the *Charnants*, the *Neptune* and the *Fleury*. The cargo of the *Neptune* was later transhipped to the *Charmante* which returned to France.

(5) Mémoire (1750) p. 40-43.

Pondicherry. The Controller-General suggested that when this operation had been completed the squadron should be used to guard the French factories and to capture prizes but he gave La Bourdonnais permission to modify the plan, provided that the ships returned to France with merchandise from India and Bourbon in the last quarter of 1746 or early in 1747 (1).

The despatch did not contain any reference to an attack on Madras and it would appear that Orry had not been informed of the project. The despatch, however, stated that as commander of the squadron La Bourdonnais was not tied to any one course of action in India provided that the bullion was safely deposited in Pondicherry and that Dupleix was consulted on any future plans. On 1 August La Bourdonnais wrote to Dupleix and asked him to collect supplies for an expedition against Madras. He submitted a comprehensive list of requirements. Among other items he asked for 2,000 uniforms and smocks, 8,000 pairs of shoes, 8,000 shirts, 4,000 hats, 4,000 pairs of gaiters, 200 officers' uniforms, 1,000 rifles, 400,000 lbs. of rice and a considerable quantity of munitions and naval stores. On receipt of this letter Dupleix began to assemble supplies and further information was obtained about the defences of Madras (2)

Meanwhile La Bourdonnais was making the final preparations for the departure of the fleet. A sloop, the *Elisabeth*, sailed from Port Louis to Madagascar with orders for the captains of the three ships, which had already been sent there to take in provisions, to return to Ile de France. In September the ships arrived in Port Louis. A ship carrying a cargo of coffee, the *Neptune de l'Inde*, arrived from Pondicherry on 7 October with the news that the English squadron was cruising between St. David and Pondicherry. La Bourdonnais, however, was unable to give the order to proceed to India until the squadron arrived from France. (3)

The ships from France anchored off Port Louis between 28 January and 1 February, 1746. The *Achille* was equipped as a ship-of-the-line but the other ships were slow-moving merchantmen with a limited armament. (4) The squadron had been at sea for nearly ten months, the crews were weary, and food supplies were low. La Bourdonnais was thus faced with the difficult problem of providing for two squadrons of ships with a total complement of 3,210 officers and men and there were in addition four ships of the 'seconde navigation' which required supplies. The

(1) Mémoire (1750) R.J. Orry to La Bourdonnais. 29 January, 1745. p. 7-11: Orry to La Bourdonnais. 25 November, 1745. "Votre point de vue principal doit être la conservation de la ville de Pondicherry et des autres établissements.... cet objet doit être préféré à toute autre entreprise" p. 12

(2) Cultru. Dupleix. La Bourdonnais to Dupleix. 1 August, 1745; Dupleix to La Bourdonnais. 22 September, 1745. p. 202-203.

(3) Mémoire (1750) p. 43.

(4) Rostaing. Expédition de La Bourdonnais dans la mer des Indes en 1746, Revue Maritime et Coloniale. Vol 67. Rostaing gives the following information about the ships: the *Achille* (Captain de Lobry), a crew of 780 and 74 cannons; the *Neptune* (Captain de la Porte-Barre) a crew of 350 and 34 cannons; the *St. Louis* (Captain Penneland) a crew of 350 and 36 cannons; the *Duc d'Orléans* (Captain Champlais) a crew of 350 and 34 cannons; the *Lys* (Captain Beard) a crew of 200 and 30 cannons; the *Renommée* (Captain de la Latais) a crew of 250 and 30 cannons; the *Phénix* (Captain de la Chaise) a crew of 250 and 44 cannons; the *Insulaire* (Captain de la Baude) a crew of 350 and 24 cannons. Rostaing mentions four more ships which were in the Isles in 1746: the *Marie-Joseph*, the *St. Pierre*, the *Parfaite* and the *Neptune de l'Inde*.

Governor ransacked Ile de France and Bourbon for food and he requisitioned the private galleons carried by the officers of the squadron which had arrived from France. Many of the skilled workers in Ile de France had died in an epidemic which had broken out in Port Louis in 1745 and therefore La Bourdonnais was forced to employ local tailors, carpenters and locksmiths for the refitting of the squadron.

The ships' crews and the slaves and workmen who had been chosen to serve in the squadron were divided into companies and a training programme, which included scaling walls and target practice, was organised for them. When individual ships had been refitted they left Ile de France and sailed to the rendezvous at Ile de Ste. Marie, off the east coast of Madagascar, where they were to take in supplies. The Acting-Governor, Didier de St. Martin, was instructed to requisition some of the ships which arrived in Ile de France and to form a squadron which was to cruise off Bombay in order to intercept English merchantmen returning from the Red Sea and the Persian Gulf. The squadron was then to join La Bourdonnais at Mahé in September. (1) On 24 March the Achille, the Neptune and those ships which had not yet sailed for the rendezvous in Madagascar left Ile de France and arrived in Bourbon on the following day. The ships took in provisions at St. Paul and the Superior Council agreed to contribute 1500 piastres towards the cost of equipping the expedition. 120 sailors with scurvy were left in the town. (2) La Bourdonnais transferred to the Achille and on 29 March he sailed for Madagascar.

The two islands had been stripped of food, equipment and munitions; in a letter to the directors La Bourdonnais described the state of affairs in the Isles, "qui restent en vérité dans un déplorable état, dépourvues absolument de tout." (3) David, who succeeded La Bourdonnais as Governor of the Isles in 1746, also commented on the situation in a report to the directors. "Je trouvais cette île pour ainsi dire déserte et dans un dépourvu absolu de tout..... La Bourdonnais en était parti... ayant emmené..... toute la garnison, les meilleurs habitants en état de porter les armes, les ouvriers noirs et les nègres au service de la Compagnie." (4) Bourbon was also stripped of troops and munitions; La Bourdonnais taking with him to India the majority of the 18 lb. guns from the island, about 150 faithful slaves, which were loaned to the Company at 18 livres per month, a few white volunteers and the greater part of the two companies which formed the garrison. (5) As Rostaing remarked in his report on the expedition, "l'élite des deux îles était embarquée sur nos vaisseaux." (6)

Shortly after leaving Bourbon the squadron ran into bad weather. The coast of Madagascar was sighted on 3 April and on the following day the Achille, the Lys and the St. Louis anchored off Foule-pointe, which was sixty miles south of Ile Ste. Marie. The Parfaite was already at anchor in the bay and the captain informed La Bourdonnais that the St. Pierre, which had set out for Ile de France with a cargo of rice and slaves, had been wrecked off the coast. The Parfaite also had a cargo of rice for the Isles but the ship had been badly damaged during a storm. La Bourdonnais put a number of officers and men aboard the ship and the squadron set sail for the Bay of Antongil. During the afternoon of 4 April a severe storm broke out and on the following day the Achille, the Lys and the Neptune were seriously damaged. Cannons, munitions, food supplies and even personal belongings had to be jettisoned and when the Achille and the Lys finally anchored off Ile Marotte, in the Bay of Antongil they required a complete refit. (7)

(1) Mémoire (1750). p.43-46; P.J. La Bourdonnais to the Company. 10 March, 1746 p.16-28

(2) Loughon. Correspondance. Vol. IV. Superior Council of Bourbon to the Company. 19 April, 1746. p.6.

(3) Mémoire (1750). P.J. La Bourdonnais to the Company. 10 March, 1746. p.27.

(4) Crépin. La Bourdonnais. p.287.

(5) Loughon. Correspondance. Vol. V. Introduction. p. XXXIX, XLIV-XLV.

(6) Rostaing. Expédition. p.416.

(7) Mémoire (1750). P.J. La Bourdonnais to St. Martin. 15 May, 1746. p.29-30;

Rostaing. Expédition. p.60-64.

A small boat was sent to Ile Ste. Marie to collect the other ships in the squadron and on 11 April the Duc d'Orléans and the Neptune arrived in the bay. The Renommée and the Marie-Joseph reached Ile Marotte on 14 April and the captain informed La Bourdonnais that the Bourbon, the Phénix, the Insulaire and the Parfaite were all safely anchored off Ile Ste. Marie where they had been joined by the St. Louis. On the same day the captain of the Neptune de l'Inde arrived in the bay in a long-boat with the news that his ship had run aground. The Phénix, the Bourbon and the St. Louis reached Ile Marotte on 16 April and the Parfaite arrived two days later. The Insulaire was the last ship to join the squadron. She anchored off the island on 28 April. (1)

La Bourdonnais was anxious to provide masts for the damaged ships. The captain of the Parfaite was ordered to strip the Neptune de l'Inde and a search party, led by Rostaing, was instructed to survey the forests which lay behind the marshy coastal flats on the mainland. A wooden causeway was built across this marshland and timber for making masts and yards was dragged to hastily constructed workshops on the coast. This operation continued for almost one month. "Pendant près d'un mois," wrote Rostaing, "... nous ne cassâmes d'être dans la boue jusqu'à mi-cuisse et d'avoir sur le corps une pluie violente." (2) On 2 May the Parfaite anchored off Ile Marotte and the masts and rigging of the Neptune de l'Inde were used to refit the Lys and the Achille. Two weeks later the Parfaite left for Ile de France. The squadron of nine ships left Ile Marotte on 22 May and in mid-June they were in sight of the Malabar coast. (3)

The English squadron had been cruising off Mergui, near the entrance to the Malacca Straights, in the latter half of 1745. In March, 1746, the squadron returned to the Coromandel Coast. Commodore Barnett died at Fort St. David in April and the command was transferred to Commodore Peyton. There were six ships in the English squadron, the Medway (60 cannons), the Preston (50 cannons), the Warwick (80 cannons), the Winchester (50 cannons), the Medway's Prize (40 cannons), the Lively (20 cannons) and a captured French frigate, the Favori (40 cannons). (4) The Bourdonnais received information concerning the whereabouts of the English squadron when, on 29 June, the Insulaire which had been sent to Mahe rejoined his squadron off the coast of Ceylon. The frigate carried despatches from Dupleix stating that the English squadron had been sighted off the Coromandel Coast between Negapatam and Pondicherry.

The French squadron left Pointe Pedro Nord off the coast of Ceylon on 5 July and early on the following morning the English ships were sighted. (5) Commodore Peyton thought that the French squadron was a fleet of merchantmen escorted by two warships and he ordered his ships to engage. (6) The French squadron moved into line of battle and at 4.30 pm. the English ships opened fire. La Bourdonnais ordered his captains to attempt to board the enemy ships but his squadron was largely composed of merchantmen which were difficult to manoeuvre. Moreover the English squadron was equipped with 24 lb. cannons and early in the engagement three of the French ships were badly damaged and forced to withdraw from the battle. When night fell the English squadron withdrew. The French lit flares to indicate their position but the English did not re-engage. (7) Peyton held a council-of-war aboard his flagship on the morning of 7 July and because one of his ships had been damaged during the engagement his officers voted in favour of withdrawing to Trincomalee. (8)

(1) Mémoire (1750) p. 30-32, 34.

(2) Rostaing. Expedition. p. 69.

(3) Ibid. p. 65-70. There were 1242 officers and men aboard the squadron, including 720 faithful slaves. 58 woodcutters and carpenters died on Ile Marotte. 400 officers and men fell sick. Mémoire (1750) P.J. La Bourdonnais to St. Martin, 15 May, 1746. p. 33, 36-37.

(4) Malleon. The French in India. p. 122-123.

(5) Rostaing. Expedition. p. 72.

(6) Ibid. p. 416.

(7) Ibid. p. 73-74.

(8) Malleon. The French in India. p. 124.

La Bourdonnais was probably surprised and relieved to see the English ships sail away but he nevertheless gave orders to pursue them. On the evening of 7 July a council-of-war was held and it was decided to make for Pondicherry. Four ships, including the Achille, which had taken a very active part in the engagement (1), were badly damaged, supplies of food and munitions were low, and 11 officers and 200 men had been either killed or wounded. The Insulaire which had been dismasted was sent to refit in the bay of Bengal. The other ships reached Pondicherry on 8 and 9 July. (2)

The troops were disembarked and the bullion was landed. Pondicherry was now safe from attack because a French squadron guarded the entrance to the harbour. Thus La Bourdonnais had successfully carried out both the instructions contained in the despatch from Orry (25 November, 1745) and the plans which he himself had submitted to the directors in a despatch dated 10 March, 1746. In the latter despatch he had written, "Je ferais tous mes efforts pour être à la cote Malabar vers le 10 de Mai... je compte passer à Mahé et y envoyer un frégate à prendre des nouvelles de nos ennemis....et nous les recontrérons....de Karikal au Fort St. David. La nous verrons qui se rendre maître de la Côte....j'ose espérer de les battre." (3)

The second part of the plan which La Bourdonnais described in the same despatch was to employ sections of the French squadron to cruise off the English factories: "Je distribuerai nos navires en croisière sur le Fort St. David, sur Madras et sur la Pointe des Palmiers, à l'entrée du Gange, et presumant déjà de notre victoire je laisse ordre ici (that is, in Ile de France) de faire partir en Juillet tous les vaisseaux qui arriveront d'Europe, et les envoyer croiser sur Bombay; par ce moyen nous embrasserons toute la côte." (4)

This plan, however, was based on the assumption that the English squadron would suffer a serious defeat, but in fact the English ships were only lightly damaged. It would therefore have been very dangerous to divide the French fleet into four or five flotillas. The English ships were faster and more heavily armed and their gunnery appears to have been remarkably accurate. (5) French naval units of two or three slow-moving, armed merchantmen cruising off English factories in India would have been destroyed one by one until the French fleet no longer existed. Thus the original official plan had to be modified. Moreover the unsatisfactory outcome of the engagement with the English lessened the chances of a successful ^{attack} on Madras. La Bourdonnais had realised that a French victory at sea was extremely doubtful and yet naval supremacy appeared to be necessary if the attack on Madras were even to be attempted. This problem weighed heavily on La Bourdonnais and two months passed before he made a final decision to attack the city.

A detailed description of the origins and development of the quarrel between La Bourdonnais and Dupleix before 1746 is not within the scope of this work. (6) The two men appear to have been friends and possibly business partners in 1733 but when Dupleix was informed that La Bourdonnais had been appointed Governor-General of Ile de France and Bourbon he realised that he has a serious rival for the command in Pondicherry.

(1) Rostaing. Expedition. p.73. The Achille which was commanded by La Bourdonnais had jettisoned 24 of her guns during the storm in April but she fired 1,000 shots in two hours using only 25 18 pounders.
 (2) Ibid. 73-75.
 (3) Memoire (1750) P.J. p.27.
 (4) Ibid. p.27.
 (5) Rostaing. Expedition. p.73.
 (6) An analysis of this celebrated quarrel may be found in the biographies of La Bourdonnais by Crépin and Herpin and in works on Dupleix by Martineau and Cultru (see Bibliography)

He had served as a councillor in Pondicherry from 1720-1726; in the latter year he was suspended and his appeal for reinstatement was not granted until September, 1730. During this period he remained in India. Shortly afterwards, ^{he obtained} an independent command in Chandanagore and he naturally hoped that his next command would be in Pondicherry. The appointment of La Bourdonnais, who had resigned from a naval command in the 'première navigation' in 1727, to an important governorship, which was regarded as a stepping-off post for a senior command in India, was bitterly resented by Dupleix.

The two men quarrelled publicly in 1737 when La Bourdonnais complained to the Company that Dupleix was trading privately with Mozambique. This situation had come about because the former had allowed Dupleix to read a report which he had written on the trading possibilities of East Africa; Dupleix had been so impressed that he had sent two of his own ships to trade with Mozambique. (December, 1736, and November, 1737.) The Council of Pondicherry however protested to the Company about La Bourdonnais' own efforts to establish trading relations with Persia. In 1737 the Company ordered La Bourdonnais to limit trading voyages from Ile de France and Bourbon to Mozambique, the Comores and Madagascar. The factories in India were forbidden to trade in this area but Dupleix disobeyed the order and ships sailed from Pondicherry and Chandanagore to Mozambique in 1738 and 1739. (2)

By 1739 Dupleix and La Bourdonnais were obvious rivals for the command in Pondicherry. In that year Dumas the Governor of Pondicherry asked the directors for leave and in the following year the brother of La Bourdonnais, Mahé de la Villebague, who was a member of the Council of Pondicherry, returned to France. It was generally believed that he had returned in order to secure the governorship for his brother. Dupleix certainly expected to hear the news that La Bourdonnais had been selected for the post. (3) When La Bourdonnais returned to France in 1740 he submitted a report to the Controller-General in which he asked to be transferred to another territory. In 1741, however, Dupleix was chosen to succeed Dumas and in October of the same year he assumed his duties in Pondicherry.

A further cause of friction lay in the attitude of Dupleix to the expedition to Mahé. La Bourdonnais was strongly criticised by senior officials of the Company in India for the part he had played in the planning of the expedition of 1741. This expedition, which cost the Company 12,000,000 livres, was a disaster; in 1742 the directors were forced to cut their annual trading budget from about 12,000,000 livres to just under 4,500,000 livres. Dupleix was advised to cut down expenses in Pondicherry at a time when conditions in the Carnatic were extremely unsettled.

Thus a quarrel between the two men was almost inevitable, ^{in 1746} owing to the increasing strains between them, in spite of the fact that they had not met for almost twelve years. When La Bourdonnais arrived in Pondicherry there were two additional factors which further complicated their relationship. According to the instructions which La Bourdonnais had received in January, 1741, his authority over the troops in French factories in India was limited; "qu'au cas que l'action se passât dans quelque autre gouvernement que celui des Iles, les Conseils l'auraient préalablement autorisé à donner les ordres à terre." (4) La Bourdonnais was apparently

1) Senior employees of the Company were engaged in widespread trading ventures which ranged from the Cape of Good Hope to Manilla. Dupleix, in Chandanagore, was able to obtain ships and crews quite easily and the trade possibilities of India and the Far East were limitless. La Bourdonnais was hard-pressed to find ships and crews and his markets were somewhat restricted. He was therefore angry when Dupleix sent ships to Mozambique.

2) Martineau. Dupleix et l'Inde Française. Vol I. p. 220.
 3) Cultru. Dupleix. p. 172.
 4) Mémoire (1750). Ordres du Ministre. 16 January, 1741. p. 57.

prepared to accept this limitation of his power; he repeatedly asked the Superior Council of Pondicherry to share responsibility for the expedition to Madras but at the same time there is every indication that he was, by 1746, incapable of working in harmony with a superior authority. Furthermore the planning of the expedition to Madras was already creating friction between the two men. As early as February, 1746, La Bourdonnais had promised to share the honours and the spoils of Madras with Dupleix if the latter agreed to share responsibility for the success or failure of the expedition but in the following month Dupleix informed him that he could not accept joint responsibility. (1)

There was great rejoicing in Pondicherry when the French ships arrived and Dupleix received La Bourdonnais with every mark of friendship and respect but shortly afterwards there occurred the inevitable dispute about precedence. The Controller-General who was aware of the antipathy between the two men advised La Bourdonnais to act with moderation: "Je vous recommande aussi très particulièrement," he wrote, "d'en agir avec lui avec les égards qu'il convient d'avoir pour un homme qui commande dans toute l'Inde." (2) La Bourdonnais, however, maintained that as an officer holding a commission from the King (3) he was equal in rank to Dupleix and he immediately assumed honours that were normally reserved for the Governor. (4) He held impressive parades and moved about the town with a bodyguard of 18 soldiers; he insisted that the 'tabour aux champs', a general salute which was normally beaten for the Governor alone, should be accorded to him. (5) There can be little doubt that he was acting in a provocative and foolish manner. He was, however, determined to advertise the fact that he held an independent command.

On 17 July La Bourdonnais submitted a plan of operations to Dupleix. He proposed to refit his squadron in Pondicherry and to increase the number of guns carried aboard the ships. He intended to cruise in the Indian Ocean in an attempt to bring about an engagement with the English squadron and to follow up this operation, whether a battle had taken place or not, with an attack on Madras. He pointed out that the plan could only succeed if the Superior Council agreed to hand over a substantial number of cannons, "car nous ne pouvons espérer de l'aborder," he wrote, "ses vaisseaux marchant généralement mieux que les nôtres et ceux qui les conduisent nous surpassant en bonne manoeuvre" (6) He asked Dupleix to supply him with 58 cannons (44 of 18lbs. and 14 of 12lbs.) and he added: "D'abord vous ne devez rien craindre pour votre place, pendant que nous serons à la côte." (7)

In the same letter La Bourdonnais stated his views about the aims of an expedition to Madras. "Si la fortune nous inite, que pensez vous que nous devons faire de Madras? Pour moi mon sentiment est d'en tirer toutes les marchandises que nous y trouverons pour les embarquer sur nos vaisseaux et rançonner le reste; car, quand nous bouverserions toutes les pierres de cette ville, dans un an d'ici, tout sera relevé et Madras sera plus fort qu'il ne l'est aujourd'hui; parce que l'on se corrige de ses fautes et nous en serons pour les peines et les frais de la démolition, sans aucun avantage." (8)

Dupleix, however, did not agree with La Bourdonnais that the destruction of Madras was unnecessary and undesirable and on 20 July, 1746, he wrote: "Je ne puis vous dire ni savoir à present le parté qu'il conviendra prendre sur Madras, si vous avez le bonheur de vous en emparer: les circonstances décideront de celui qui sera le plus convenable. Je vous

(1) Cultru. Dupleix. La Bourdonnais to Dupleix. 3 February, 1746. p. 204: Dupleix to La Bourdonnais. 23 April, 1746. p. 205.

(2) Mémoire. (1750) P.J. Orry to La Bourdonnais. 29 January, 1745. p. 10.

(3) Mauritius Archives. Box Y2-23. Photostat copy from French National Archives. (A.N. Mar. C 192) Commission de Capitaine de frégate. 11 April, 1745.

(4) Private diary of Ananda Ranga Pillai (1736-61) Vol II. p. 110-111.

(5) Ibid. p. 120-124, 166-7.

(6) Mémoire (1750) P.J. La Bourdonnais to Dupleix. 20 July, 1746. p. 41.

(7) Ibid. p. 42.

(8) Ibid. p. 43-44.

serai simplement la réflexion que tandis que cette place subsistera, Pondicherry ne sera que languir et que tout le commerce y tombera toujours....je ne suis point du tout du sentiment que cette ville étant démantelée puisse se rétablir en un an.Plusieurs années n'ont pu suffire à la mettre comme elle est.Les facilités et facultés sont actuellement bien moindres.Il ne peut résulter qu'un très grande bien pour cette place,de la démolition des murs et fortifications de cette ville.(1) Dupleix nevertheless concurred with La Bourdonnais that the defeat of the English squadron was a necessary preliminary to an expedition to Madras.

During the last week of July La Bourdonnais' squadron was refitted. Dupleix handed over 28 guns of 18lbs,12 of 12lbs.,and 22 of 8lbs. La Bourdonnais later complained that Dupleix had withheld a number of 18lb. guns,thus forcing him to sail with an inadequate number of heavy cannons but this appears to be a trivial criticism.(2) Although La Bourdonnais was confident that the English squadron would not attack Pondicherry whilst he was in the area,there was always the possibility of a defeat for the French in a naval engagement with Peyton's force. Dupleix feared the consequences of stripping the walls of Pondicherry of its cannon.Unfortunately each accused the other of acting in an unreasonable manner and in late July Dupleix did not attempt to conceal his hatred of La Bourdonnais.(3)

On 3 August the squadron was ready for sailing.The Renommée,which had been cruising off Madras,returned to Pondicherry on 28 July.The fleet was inspected by the son of Chunda Sahib and on 4 August the ships set sail.(4)La Bourdonnais had made elaborate arrangements for the transfer of his command to Dupleix in the event of his death:"Que toute l'escadre sort à vos ordres jusqu'au 15 Octobre,temps auquel elle doit faire son retour aux Iles pour leur sûreté."(5)He had also persuaded Dupleix to appoint a special representative to sail with the squadron, "pour veiller....tous les intérêts de la Compagnie."(6).

The decision to appoint special representatives to sail with the squadron was of vital importance.The Controller-General and the majority of the directors were unaware of the plan to seize Madras and therefore La Bourdonnais and Dupleix who had devised the scheme realised the need for impartial observers.In his despatch to the directors of 10 March,1746,La Bourdonnais had written:"Pour éviter à mes ennemis la peine d'éplucher ma conduite sur les dépenses et les prises qui pourront se faire....j'ai fait nommer M.Bonneau,conseiller commissaire de l'escadre et lui ai donne sous les ordres M .Laurent...en qualité d'écrivain principal de l'escadre."(7)To Dupleix he wrote on 29 July:"Ma façon de penser sur l'intérêt dans cette Compagnie est si éloignée d'aucun bénéfice que la crainte même du soupçon m'a fait prendre la precaution d'embarquer sur l'escadre M.Bonneau....Je vous prie pour ma satisfaction de nommer encore un commissaire de Pondicherry qui d'accord et conjointement avec celui de l'escadre veille aux intérêts de la Compagnie,sur tout pour ce que l'one pourra retirer en nature par la capitulation ou autre traité que l'on pourra faire pour la Compagnie."(8) Nevertheless when La Bourdonnais decided to ransom Madras he disregarded the advice of the representative from Pondicherry on the grounds that he had delegated the power to select such representatives to the Council.(9)

(1)Mémoire(1750)P.J.Dupleix to La Bourdonnais.20 July,1746.p.43-44,note(a).
 (2)Ibid.p.60-61.
 (3)Private diary of AnandaRanga Pillai.p.128-129.
 (4)Rostaing.Expedition.p.413.
 (5)Mémoire.(1750)P.J.La Bourdonnais to Dupleix.28.July,1746.p.45-47.
 (6)Ibid.La Bourdonnais to Dupleix.29 July,1746.p.47.
 (7)Ibid.La Bourdonnais to Dupleix.23 August,1746.p.57.
 (8)Ibid.p.46.
 (9)Ibid.Le sieur de La Bourdonnais qui la(l'escadre)commandait avec le pouvoir le plus ample,avait seul le droit de les nommer ou de les révoquer.p.46.note (a).

The French squadron set sail on 4 August. The ships sailed in a southerly direction and anchored off Fort St. David. On the following day La Bourdonnais, aboard the Achille, lowered his flag and the English returned the salute. The squadron anchored off Cuddalore on the evening of 5 August. Two days later the ships reached Karikal. La Bourdonnais who was extremely uneasy about the readiness of the squadron for action sent a special dispatch to Dupleix on 10 August informing him that the supplies of ball and shot were inadequate, that dysentery had broken out among the crews and that he himself was ill. In addition, he was obsessed with the idea that the English squadron might suddenly appear when his ships were anchored off Madras and capture or sink the entire fleet. (1)

On 10 August he sent another despatch to Dupleix with the proposal to send French troops to attack Fort St. David by land. He believed that the English would sail for the Coromandel Coast in order to bring reinforcements; once the ships arrived off Fort St. David the French would attack. He pointed out that if, on the other hand, the English ships failed to assist the Fort it could be argued that they had been badly damaged. Fort St. David would be taken and the French could then proceed with an attack on Cuddalore. (2) Dupleix, however, replied that an attack on the lesser forts would alienate the Nawab and prove costly and abortive. He emphasised that the real object of the expedition to India was the destruction of the English fleet and an attack on Madras. (3)

The French squadron had sailed for Trinquebar on 7 August to take in fresh supplies of water. They were becalmed for some days but on 13 August the ships arrived off Karikal. La Bourdonnais received information from Dutch ships which were anchored in the harbour that the enemy squadron had been sighted off the north coast of Ceylon. On 14 August he informed Dupleix that he had decided to return to Pondicherry and he advised the latter to make the final arrangements for the attack on Madras. "Nous n'avons que deux partis à prendre," he wrote, "celui de les aller chercher, ou celui de les forcer à venir nous trouver eux-mêmes. Si nous allons les chercher, il est sûr qu'ils nous éviteront. Il est encore sûr qu'ils marcheront mieux que nous-et le temps passe: voyons l'autre parti, si nous allons à Madras le pis est qu'ils arrivent avant que nous l'ayons pris. N'importe il faut que, forts ou faibles, ils viennent nous combattre." (4)

On 16 August, however, La Bourdonnais changed his plans and sailed southwards to the Dutch factory at Negapatam. The ships anchored in the harbour on 17 August. La Bourdonnais discovered that there were two French ships, which had been purchased from the English, lying in the harbour and he forced the Dutch Governor to pay an indemnity. (5) Shortly after the arrival of the French the English squadron was sighted off Negapatam. The French hoisted Dutch flags but the enemy ships did not enter the harbour and as soon as the French ships began to put on sail the English sailed southwards. La Bourdonnais pursued the enemy but on 21 August he returned to Negapatam. (6) The French ships had again been proved inferior to the English ships in speed. "L'Achille seule était meilleur voilier qu'eux," wrote Rostaing, "et tous les autres navires de l'escadre n'étaient que des Coffres chargés de monde et canons." (7) A Dutch ship anchored off Negapatam on 22 August and La Bourdonnais was informed that the English ships had been sighted on 19 August sailing southwards for Ceylon. La Bourdonnais immediately gave orders for the squadron to return to Pondicherry.

(1) Mémoire (1750) P.J. Labourdonnais to Dupleix. 10 August, 1746. p. 47.

(2) Ibid. p. 47-48.

(3) Malleson. The French in India. Dupleix to La Bourdonnais. 12 August, 1746. p. 132

(4) Mémoire (1750) P.J. La Bourdonnais to Dupleix. 15 August, 1746. p. 52.

(5) Ibid. La Bourdonnais to the Superior Council of Negapatam. 17 August, 1746. p. 55.

(6) Ibid. La Bourdonnais to Dupleix. 23 August, 1746. p. 56.

(7) Rostaing. Expedition. p. 415.

(8) Mémoire. (1750) P.J. La Bourdonnais to Dupleix. 23 August, 1746. p. 56-57.

When the fleet anchored off Pondicherry La Bourdonnais was carried ashore in a litter. (1) The greater number of his despatches from 10 March to 23 August contain references to the unsatisfactory state of his health but Dupleix later printed a letter, dated 19 August, 1746, in which he advised La Bourdonnais to embark in a litter, in order to spread the rumour that he was seriously ill. It was later suggested that La Bourdonnais used this plan, which was intended to lull the English in Madras, in order to remain in port and postpone a decision to attack the city. (2) There can be little doubt that he was really ill (3) but the responsibility of leading an expedition to Madras weighed heavily upon him and in late August he was prepared to use almost any argument to persuade Dupleix and the Superior Council of Pondicherry to abandon the project.

On 23 August he had sent a despatch to Dupleix in which he pointed out the dangers of an attack on Madras. "Le Ministre m'a ordonné d'armer les vaisseaux en guerre," he wrote, "d'abord pour apporter les fonds à Pondicherry et faire ensuite les courses.... Il est vrai qu'il me laisse le maître de mes opérations, après qui il me dit précisément de charger les vaisseaux et de les conduire en Europe. Il ne m'est point parlé de Madras. Il est vrai que par la première escadre (1741) en ayant conçu le dessein, je le communiquai à M. Dumas et en écrivis au Ministre.... Mais comme ce n'est pas une chose ordonnée je crois que je ne dois m'y déterminer.... car notre descente faite, nos vaisseaux étant dégarnis, s'ils tombent dessus à l'imprévu, ils peuvent brûler ou couler nos navires, ou les prendre et secourir Madras.... Qu'est ce que je craigns le plus dans tout? C'est la perte de nos navires qui serait une perte irréparable pour la Compagnie." (4)

In a despatch dated 26 August La Bourdonnais repeated these arguments and recommended that the ships in the squadron should be used to carry merchandise to Europe. "Ne valait-il pas mieux rester à Pondicherry," he wrote, "prendre les marchandises qui y étaient, venir achever de charger du café aux îles et arriver en Europe avec dix cargaisons." (5) He stated that he was prepared to lead an attack on Madras if Dupleix and the Council would share responsibility for the expedition. "Ainsi, après une mûre délibération," he wrote, "dans laquelle vous aurez résolu qu'il est avantageux à la Compagnie de marcher à Madras, je suis prêt... Mais cette affaire est trop délicate pour me charger seul de l'évènement.... J'attends donc, Monsieur, une délibération qui dise qu'il est important pour l'honneur du pavillon et les intérêts de la Compagnie de faire le siège de cette place, sans laquelle je ne partirai point." (6)

Dupleix and Paradis, the Governor of Karikal, and certain members of the Superior Council of Pondicherry were deeply committed to a policy of aggression against Madras. The former had spent an immense amount of money buying food and equipment for the expedition and he was prepared to use all the means at his disposal to persuade La Bourdonnais to attack the city. Besides, he wanted the French fleet to winter in India; information had reached Pondicherry that the English squadron had received reinforcements and the city was ill-prepared for a long siege. On 26 August the Superior Council of Pondicherry met to discuss the despatch which had been sent by La Bourdonnais. (7)

The Council drafted a reply which was a masterpiece of studied insolence. "Cette communication et le conseil que vous nous y demandez," they wrote, "nous a d'autant plus surpris, que jusqu'à présent vous avez

(1) Private diary of Ananda Ranga Pillai. Vol II. p. 233.

(2) Crépin. La Bourdonnais. p. 283-285.

(3) Both contemporary witnesses, Rostaing (p. 417) and Ananda Ranga Pillai (Vol II, p. 233-235, 242) mention the illness of La Bourdonnais.

(4) Mémoire (1750). P. J. La Bourdonnais to Dupleix 23 August, 1746. p. 57-58.

(5) Ibid. p. 62.

(6) Ibid. p. 63-64.

(7) Cultru. Dupleix. p. 205-210: Private Diary of Ananda Ranga Pillai. Vol II. p. 253-255.

tenu à votre égard un parfait silence sur les opérations de votre escadre et que le conseil n'a reçu du Ministre ni de la Compagnie aucune instruction sur ce qui la regarde....nous avons vu agir depuis près d'un an M.le Commandant General et faire des préparatifs et des dépenses qui ne pouvaient tendre qu'à un projet considerable...contens de voir que la suite pourrait réparer nos pertes...nous voyions avec satisfaction avancer ces préparatifs." (1) They pointed out that the English fleet had shown its inferiority by refusing to fight and yet the French squadron was idling in port, "et nous ne voyons qu'avec une peine extrême que l'escadre Anglaise est toujours en parage, de pouvoir s'emparer des vaisseaux que nous devons attendre d'Europe." (2) Finally the Council stated that La Bourdonnais should either search for the English at sea or attack Madras; "Nous croyons même pouvoir dire qu'il ferait fâcheux, honteux même pour la nation d'abandonner ces deux moyens." (3)

On 21 August a delegation from the Superior Council called on La Bourdonnais and presented a petition, "pour le sommer de la part du Roi de choisir l'un des deux partis...Faute par lui de choisir celui du choix duquel on le laisse le maître, de répondre en son propre et privé nom, de tout ce qui pourra arriver par la suite." (4) The petition contained the suggestion that La Bourdonnais should transfer his command to Captain de la Porte-Barré if he considered that he was too ill to sail with the squadron.

La Bourdonnais ordered the ships to put to sea under the command of de la Porte-Barré but he insisted that the Superior Council had no power to direct the operations of the squadron. "Je n'ai consulté le Conseil que sur l'affaire de Madras," he wrote, "Il dépendait de lui d'opiner décisivement pour ou contre. Quant à la destination de mon escadre, ce n'est pas à lui à en prendre connaissance." (5) When this letter reached Dupleix he ordered the captains of the squadron to return 250 European soldiers and 100 sepoys to the garrison of Pondicherry on the pretext that their services were required to defend the city. (6) When, however, La Bourdonnais informed him that the squadron had received orders to attack English shipping off Madras he withdrew only 125 European soldiers and 50 sepoys. (7)

The squadron sailed on 27 August. La Bourdonnais remained in Pondicherry. Rostaing states that the fleet sailed under the orders of Porte-Barré, ~~because~~ La Bourdonnais, "ne ^{voulant} point laisser notre escadre dans l'inaction, en attendant le retour de sa santé." (8) The fleet cruised off Madras for a week and two English vessels were captured. In a despatch to Dupleix dated 4 September, La Bourdonnais commented on the results of the expedition. "Mon escadre....paraît," he wrote, "J'ai avis qu'elle a fort mal exécuté les ordres que je lui ai donnés. Sans deux embarcations, qui ne sont prises, que parce qu'elles l'ont voulu (ce sont les termes de M. de la Porte-Barré) cette sortie eût été très infructueuse." (9) These somewhat peevish remarks formed the preface to a new plan for an attack on Madras.

La Bourdonnais stated that his health had improved and that he was prepared to lead the attack provided that Dupleix sent provisions to the Isles and collected supplies for revictualing the squadron when it returned to Europe. In the despatch he asked Dupleix for advice about surrender terms, "Si Madras veut à prix d'argent se garantir d'un bombardement et des événements d'un siège." (10) Finally he asked for advice as to whether he should make an immediate attack or keep the squadron in

1) Mémoire (1750) P.J. The Superior Council of Pondicherry to La Bourdonnais. 26 August, 1746. p.64-65.
 2) Ibid. p.66.
 3) Ibid. p.66.
 4) Ibid. Somme faite... par le Conseil de Pondicherry. 27 August, 1746. p.67.
 5) Ibid. La Bourdonnais to the Superior Council of Pondicherry. 27 August, p.65.
 6) Ibid. p.66.
 7) Ibid. La Bourdonnais to Dupleix. 27 August, 1746. p.68-69.
 8) Rostaing. Expedition. p.417.
 9) Mémoire (1750). P.J. La Bourdonnais to Dupleix. 4 September, 1746. p.69.
 10) Ibid. p.70.

India until January and attack Madras in November or December when the cyclone season had ended.

In a despatch dated 6 September Dupleix recommended an immediate attack on the city. "La terreur est répandue dans cette ville," he wrote, "ainsi il est presque certain que vous réussirez. Il est vrai que vous avez à craindre l'escadre Anglaise: mais le parti que vous prenez de laisser 1800 hommes à bord de votre escadre, la met bien en état de défendre. (1) He explained that he could not assume joint responsibility for the expedition because La Bourdonnais was in sole command of the squadron but he agreed to provide stores and to send food to the Isles. On the question of surrender terms for Madras he advised La Bourdonnais to claim compensation for five ships which had been captured or sunk by the English, 1,000,000 gold pagodas to cover the cost of fitting out the fleet and 1,000,000 gold pagodas to indemnify the Company. (2) Finally he advised La Bourdonnais to include in any capitulation treaty a clause to neutralise the Indian ocean from the Cape to the Philippines. (3)

La Bourdonnais supervised the fitting out of the squadron and on 9 September he wrote to Orry informing him that he had decided to attack Madras. Although the Governor and the Superior Council had refused to accept any responsibility for the expedition, La Bourdonnais explained that the decision had only been taken in response to constant pressure from Dupleix, "à me presser dans les termes les plus forts d'entreprendre le siège de Madras comme le seul capable de dédommager la compagnie." (4) He added that he had been accused of over-caution but he stated that since, "le Conseil et le public annoncent par tout que le succès n'en est pas douteux et en conséquence toute notre nation, même les étrangers, regardent ma conduite comme trop circonspect," (5) he had finally agreed to lead an expedition to Madras. Thus having assured the Controller-General that the attack was in obedience to the general will of the government and people of Pondicherry, La Bourdonnais completed the fitting out of his ships and on 12 September the squadron sailed northwards.

The fleet was composed of one ship-of-the-line, eight converted merchantmen and two smaller vessels. The St. Louis and the Brilliant were sent ahead to lie in wait for ships which sailed from Madras when the attack began, and the Neptune and the Bourbon were ordered to sail to the Madras roadstead. The rest of the squadron followed with the troops. On the evening of 14 September the ships anchored 12 miles south of Madras and between 500 and 600 men were landed. These troops marched along the coast in sight of the ships. On the following morning the squadron anchored off St. Thomé and over 1000 European soldiers, 400 sepoy and about 400 slaves from the Isles were landed. Over 1,700 men remained aboard the ships. (6)

A camp was set up at St. Thomé and a patrol, led by Rostaing, was sent out to choose sites for gun positions. On the evening of 15 September an English merchant named Barnavel, who had married a daughter of Madame Dupleix by her first marriage, visited La Bourdonnais and asked in the name of the Governor and Council of Madras for a temporary truce to enable European women to leave the town. La Bourdonnais refused this request although he agreed to give a safe conduct pass to the wife of the Governor and also to Mrs Barnavel. On the following day a gun position was set up to the south of Madras and the French troops marched to a village west of the city where a second camp was constructed.

(1) Mémoire (1750) P.J. Dupleix to La Bourdonnais. 6 September, 1746. p. 72.

(2) Ibid. Mémoire from Dupleix. 6 September, 1746. p. 74-76. The Mémoire contains instructions for the treatment of minority groups in Madras and the names of persons whose property was to be respected.

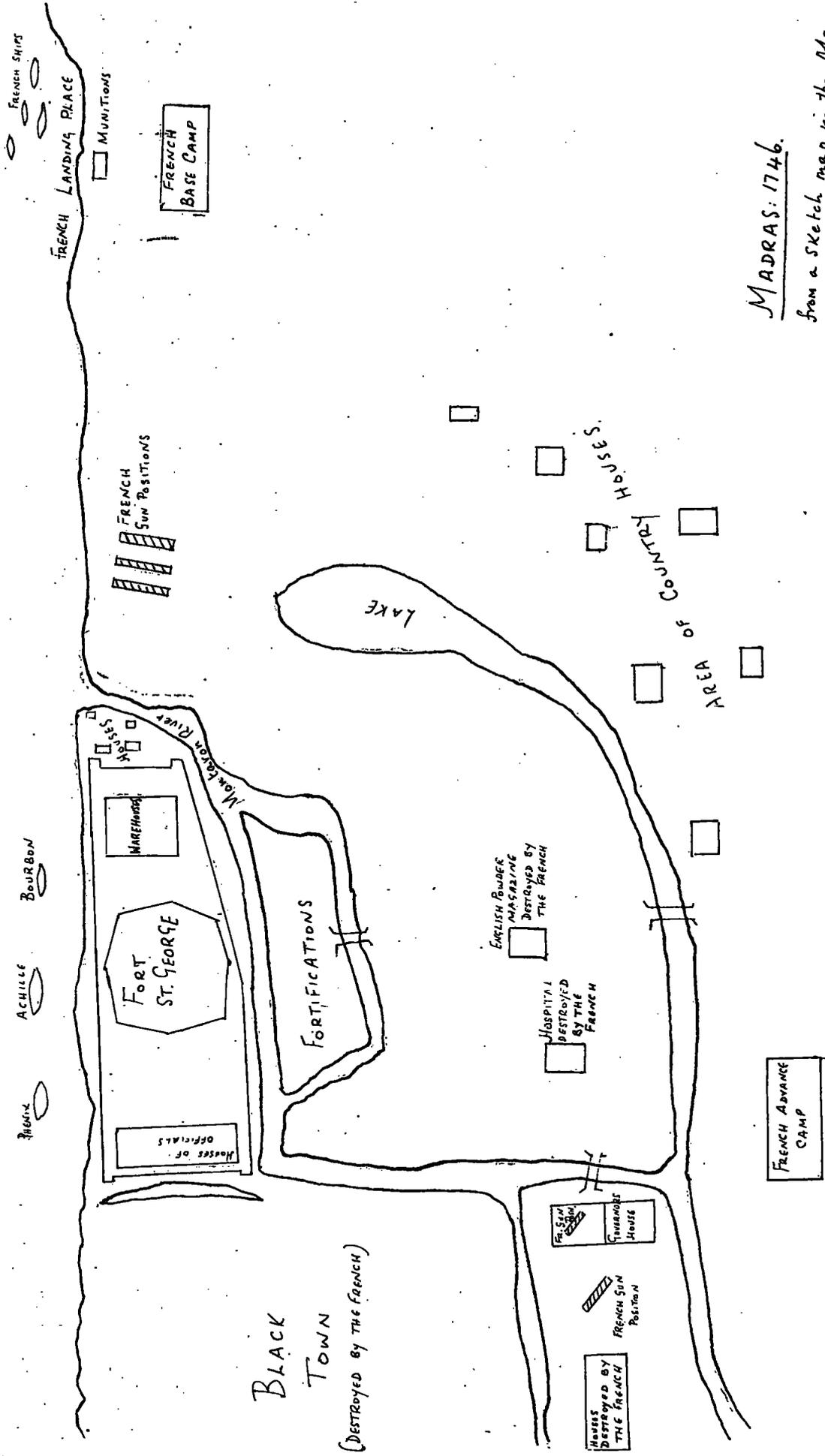
(3) Ibid. p. 76.

(4) Ibid. p. 77.

(5) Ibid. p. 77.

(6) Mémoire. (1750) p. 69-70; Rostaing. Expedition. p. 417.

MADRAS: 1746.
from a sketch map in the MEMOIRE (1750). H. Ed. L.



BLACK TOWN
(DESTROYED BY THE FRENCH)

MADRAS: 1746.

from a sketch map in the MEMOIRE (1750). H. Ed. L.

On 17 September an attack by a regiment of sepoys was repulsed; the French counter-attacked and occupied the summer residence of the Governor of Madras which was situated 300-400 yards west of the fort. The houses which lay to the north of the summer residence were pillaged and burnt and two gun positions were set up. (1)

Madras, which had been acquired by the English in 1639, consisted of a narrow strip of land about a mile broad and six miles long. A small island, about 450 yards in length, which was separated from the mainland by a narrow channel, was fortified and given the name of Fort St. George. The adjoining strip of mainland was inhabited by Indians and it became known as the Black Town. Although the factory was well-protected it had certain draw-backs; entry into the harbour was difficult owing to the surf and from October to January the roadstead was very dangerous on account of the monsoon. Nevertheless the town had become very prosperous and as early as 1653 the Council of Madras assumed responsibility for the supervision of the activities of all English trading posts on the Coromandel Coast.

The Council of Madras and the directors of the East India Company were convinced that the city would not be attacked and therefore the defenses had been neglected. Rostaing wrote in his report, "Cette nation regards toujours nos desseins comme chimériques," and he described the prevailing attitude in Madras as 'une aveugle sécurité.' (2) In 1744 Dupleix, who was alarmed at the presence of an English squadron in the Indian Ocean, persuaded the Nawab of the Carnatic to warn the Governor of Madras that European factories on the Coromandel Coast were in neutral territory. Anwaroodeen informed the Governor of Madras, Nicholas Morse, that he would not allow the English to attack or blockade French factories in the Carnatic and he also stated that the prohibition applied equally to the French. Thus in 1746 Madras was totally unprepared for an attack. The garrison consisted of less than 300 soldiers and the defences of Fort St. George were wholly inadequate. In addition, there appears to have been considerable ill-feeling between the civil and military authorities in the city. (3)

Although the defences of the city were weak the Governor and Council of Madras believed that the presence of an English squadron in the Indian Ocean and the assurances of the Nawab of the Carnatic, were adequate guarantees against attack. Unfortunately neither of these guarantees had any validity. Commodore Peyton had sailed northwards on 3 September his squadron was off Pulicat and in mid-September it was cruising off Bengal, (4) - and the Nawab of the Carnatic was no longer prepared to come to the assistance of the English. Dupleix had again entered into negotiations with Anwaroodeen and in mid-September he promised the Nawab that once the French had captured the city they would first destroy Fort St. George and then hand Madras over to him. (5)

At daybreak on 17 September the bombardment began. Rostaing wrote in his report; "Il était important de jeter au plus vite la terreur chez des gens peu aguérés." (6) When night fell the Bourbon, the St. Louis and the Achille opened fire on the city. There had been a considerable amount of drunkenness and ill-discipline among the French troops when the suburbs of the city were pillaged and this probably caused La Bourdonnais to postpone the assault on the Black Town until the 22 September. (7) During the night of 18 September La Bourdonnais received a despatch from Dupleix informing him that four ships had

- (1) Mémoire (1750) p. 70-71; Rostaing. Expédition. p. 418-419.
- (2) Rostaing. Expédition. p. 420.
- (3) Ibid. p. 421.
- (4) Malleson. The French in India. p. 142.
- (5) Mémoire (1750) P. J. Dupleix to La Bourdonnais. 21 September, 1746. p. 92-3.
- (6) Rostaing. Expédition. p. 418.
- (7) Ibid. p. 419.

been sighted off Pondicherry on 17 September, (1) but on the following day he received a further despatch from Dupleix which stated that the information had been incorrect. (2) Meanwhile

Meanwhile La Bourdonnais had had several conversations with a Spaniard named Francisco Pereiro whom he had known in 1741. (3) Pereiro was a doctor who had been in the service of Chunda Sahib and in 1740, when the latter was expelled from Arcot, he had escaped to Pondicherry. He had later retired to Madras. Shortly after the arrival of the French squadron Pereiro approached La Bourdonnais and gave him valuable information about the defences of the city. When the siege began he offered to act as an intermediary during negotiations for a capitulation. (4) On 19 September the step-daughter of Dupleix, Marie Vincent Barnavel, informed La Bourdonnais that the Governor of Madras had received a letter from Pereiro, "dans laquelle il fait mention de quelque discours- et que vous avez paru être incliné à un accommodement." (5) Towards 8 p.m. on the same day La Bourdonnais received another letter from Mrs. Barnavel in which she stated that the Governor was prepared to discuss surrender terms. (6)

On the morning of 20 September two members of the Council of Madras, Monson and Hallyburton, were escorted to the French headquarters in order to discuss the capitulation. They pointed out that Madras was situated in neutral territory and that the Nawab of the Carnatic had declared that he would regard an attack on the town as an act of hostility against himself. La Bourdonnais, however, explained that the attack was a legal act of war because the English had captured the Favori and burned the Pondicherry in neutral ports. The deputies then proposed that the French should withdraw from Madras on the payment of a ransom but La Bourdonnais insisted on an unconditional surrender. He stated that he would accept ransom terms once a surrender had been negotiated. At 10 a.m. the deputies returned to Fort St. George for consultations with the Governor. (7)

Shortly after the return of the deputies La Bourdonnais sent a despatch to Morse pointing out the hopelessness of the English position. "Une plus longue résistance," he wrote, "deviendrait obstination et ferait contre toute règle de guerre puisque nous sommes dix contre un... que si vous me contraignez à vous emparer de vive force vos vies, celles de vos femmes, de vos enfants et vos biens, tout sera à la disposition d'un soldatesque, qui outre toujours les droits de la guerre. D'ailleurs... j'ai dans mes troupes des cipayes (sepoys), gens pillards, des caffres féroces et cruels; ils se croient tout permis dans une ville prise d'assaut." (8) The French reopened fire at 3 p.m.

At 6 p.m. Francisco Pereiro arrived in the French camp and asked La Bourdonnais for permission to enter Fort St. George. He proposed to visit Morse and other members of the Council in order to persuade them to accept the terms of surrender. Permission was granted; when he returned he stated that the Governor had asked for a cease-fire for the night and that he, Pereiro had assured Morse that the French would agree to this request. La Bourdonnais ordered him to return to the Fort with a letter for Morse which stated that the bombardment would continue until 6 p.m. the following day, when there would be a cease-fire to enable English deputies to proceed to the French camp. "Mais je vous avertis," La Bourdonnais wrote, "que s'ils n'apportent pas une parole décisive, je n'écouterai plus aucun pour parler." (9)

(1) Mémoire (1750) P.J. Dupleix to La Bourdonnais 17 September, 1746. p.79.

(2) Ibid. p.79-80.

(3) Mémoire (1750). p.258.

(4) Ibid. p.257-258. "Le sieur de La Bourdonnais s'accepte les propositions qu'il lui fit d'entrer dans la place pour les engager à capituler. p.258.

(5) Mémoire (1750) P.J. Mrs. Barnavel to La Bourdonnais. 19 September, 1746. p.80.

(6) Ibid. p.80-81.

(7) Mémoire (1750) p.71-73.

(8) Mémoire (1750) P.J. La Bourdonnais to Morse. 20 September, 1746. p.81.

(9) Ibid. La Bourdonnais to Morse. 20 September, 1746. p.82.

Monson and Hallyburton arrived in the French camp on 21 September and the terms of a treaty of capitulation were drawn up. Hallyburton returned to the fort with the articles of capitulation but Morse refused to sign unless he was given an assurance that the Governor and councillors would not be imprisoned. La Bourdonnais acceded to his request and Morse signed the treaty. It was agreed that Fort St. George and the city of Madras and its dependencies should be handed over to the French at 2pm on 21 September. (1) The capitulation stated that the Governor, the councillors, the Company officials and the officers of the garrison were at liberty to attend to their personal affairs in Madras, and even to return to England, provided that they did not engage in hostilities against the French, unless an exchange of prisoners had been effected. The soldiers in the garrison and the sailors and civilians in Fort St. George were, however, regarded as prisoners of war. (2) The Governor and councillors were ordered to hand over to the French all merchandise, accounts, arsenals, ships, munitions and other properties of the English East India Company. All merchandise, valuables and moveable property which belonged to the inhabitants of the fort were to be handed over to the French. (3)

When the capitulation had been signed, La Bourdonnais addressed the troops and informed them that disorderly conduct and looting would be punished by death. (4) At 2pm on 21 September he approached the main entrance to the city at the head of 500 men. He was met by the Governor who handed over his sword. La Bourdonnais returned the sword and entered the city by the Water Gate. The English flag was lowered, the Bourbon flag was hoisted on the city wall and a 21 gun salute was fired. Troops were posted at the gates of Fort St. George to prevent the exit of merchandise. The gun positions and munitions were seized and the inhabitants were disarmed. The European women, who had taken refuge in the Church of the Capuchins, together with their children, were asked to return to their homes and arrangements were made to billet French officers with important English families. A solemn Te Deum was sung in the church of the Capuchins. (5)

Shortly after the signing of the capitulation La Bourdonnais informed Dupleix that the city had surrendered. In carefully chosen words he invited Dupleix to establish, "une correspondance entre le gouvernement de Pondicherry et le mien," and he added, "je ne me trouve pas mal du titre de Commandant de Terre et de Mer." (6) In a further despatch which was written on the same day he informed Dupleix that, "les Anglais se sont rendus à moi avec plus de précipitation encore que je ne vous l'ai écrit. Je les ai à discretion et la capitulation qu'ils ont signée, m'est restée sans qu'ils aient songé à m'en demander un double." (7) Two days later La Bourdonnais qualified this statement. "Cependant il y a une sorte de capitulation signée du Gouverneur," he wrote, "dont ci-joint est copie. Elle ne fait, comme vous voyez, qu'autoriser les droits que j'ai sur le sort de cette place." (8)

In the despatches written by La Bourdonnais immediately after the fall of Madras there is no mention of any inviolable arrangements which had been made with the Council of Madras to ransom the city. Indeed it appears that La Bourdonnais regarded the submission of the city as an

(1) Mémoire (1750) p. 75.

(2) The soldiers in the garrison were to be sent to Fort St. David until the ransom was paid when they were to be allowed to return to defend the city. The sailors were to be sent to Cuddalore, and, after exchanges had been effected, the remainder were to proceed to England on condition that they did not engage in hostilities against the French.

(3) Mémoire (1750) Capitulation du Fort St. George et de la ville de Madras. p. 75-77

(4) Ibid. p. 75.

(5) Ibid. p. 77-79.

(6) Mémoire (1750) P. J. La Bourdonnais to Dupleix. 21 September, 1746. p. 84.

(7) Ibid. La Bourdonnais to Dupleix, 21 September (8pm.) p. 86.

(8) Ibid. La Bourdonnais to Dupleix. 23 September, 1746. p. 87.

unconditional surrender. In the Mémoire (1750), however, a conversation with the two English deputies, Mason and Hallyburton, is recorded in which La Bourdonnais stated that he had promised on his honour to restore the city when a ransom had been paid: "Vous nous en donnez donc votre parole d'honneur, répondirent les députés. Oui, dit-il, je vous la donne et vous pouvez compter qu'elle est inviolable." (1) It is very unusual for the commander of a victorious army to make solemn promises to an enemy which has agreed to surrender at discretion and the truth of La Bourdonnais' account of the interview may be doubted. The capitulation merely stated that, "si par rachat on rend la ville de Madras, MM. les Anglais seront les maîtres de reprendre leur garnison;" (2) - a clear indication that a negotiated ransom was merely one of the courses of action open to La Bourdonnais. Nevertheless when La Bourdonnais finally signed a treaty of ransom he justified his conduct to his own officers (3) and later to the directors of the Company, on the ground that a solemn agreement had been made with the English deputies before the signing of the capitulation.

Thus it would appear that for three or four days after the fall of Madras La Bourdonnais was undecided about the future of the city. In a despatch to Dupleix dated 23 September he explained that there were three courses of action open to him; to annex the city, to destroy it, or to accept a ransom. He pointed out that a policy of annexation would be shortsighted and contrary to the instructions which he had received in 1740, forbidding him to retain conquests on Indian soil. "Il est sûr," he added, "qu'à la paix la reddition de cette place serait un des articles du traité. Le Roi le rendrait et la Compagnie n'en aurait rien." (4) He suggested that if Madras were burnt down the English would build another factory, "peut-être avec moins de dépense qu'il ne leur en coûtera pour racheter celle-ci." (5) Finally he expressed the opinion that a negotiated ransom was the only practical method of taking advantage of the fall of the city. He proposed to strip Madras of merchandise, artillery and munitions and to accept a ransom for what remained. The ransom for Fort St. George was to be paid to the Company and that for the Black Town was to be divided among the members of the expedition. Payment of the ransom was to be made in bills drawn on the Company in London and guaranteed by the taking of hostages. (6) The Nawab of the Carnatic, Anwarooddeen, had meanwhile received information that the French were besieging Madras. He had previously declared that he would not allow Europeans in the Carnatic to engage in hostilities on land and now he ordered Dupleix to recall the troops and ships to Pondicherry. He stated that if his orders were not obeyed he would send an army to the assistance of Madras. Dupleix, however, decided to appeal to the self-interest of the Nawab and he sent instructions to his agent in Arcot to tell the Nawab that the Superior Council of Pondicherry would hand the city over to him. (7)

On 21 September Dupleix informed La Bourdonnais of the negotiations with Anwarooddeen. "Cet éveil," he wrote, "doit vous engager à presser vivement cette place et à ne point écouter les propositions que l'on pourrait vous faire pour la rançonner après la prise; car ce serait tromper le Nabob et l'engager à se joindre à nos ennemis." (8) He warned La Bourdonnais that the English Council did not have the capital available to ransom the city and he advised him to raise Madras to the ground.

Replying to Dupleix, La Bourdonnais repeated his argument about the

(1) Mémoire (1750). p. 75; Mémoire (1750) P.J. The Council of Madras to La Bourdonnais. 27 September, 1746. p. 153.

(2) Ibid. p. 76.

(3) Rostaing. Expédition. p. 423.

(4) Mémoire (1750) P.J. La Bourdonnais to Dupleix. 23 September, 1746. p. 88.

(5) Ibid. p. 88.

(6) Ibid. p. 89-90. The despatch was taken to Pondicherry by Radis, the commander of the troops from Pondicherry.

(7) Ibid. Dupleix to La Bourdonnais. 21 September, 1746. p. 92-93.

(8) Ibid. p. 92-93.

inadvisability of destroying the city and he added, "je n'ai que vingt jours à rester ici et....ce temps n'est pas suffisant pour mettre la place dans l'état où vous semblez la désirer pour la remettre au Nabob." (1) Nevertheless he asked the Governor of Pondicherry to submit, "un plan suivi de la façon dont vous pensez que je dois traiter cette ville, sans perdre de vue le retour absolument nécessaire de mes vaisseaux chargés en Europe à la monçon prochaine." (2) In a further despatch written on the same day La Bourdonnais informed Dupleix that he had received a letter from the Nawab ordering him to withdraw from Madras. (3) He enclosed a reply to the Nawab in which he stated that the attack on the city was a legal act of war. He asked Dupleix to arrange for the letter to be translated and submitted to the Nawab. (4)

On 24 September the Superior Council informed La Bourdonnais of their decision to appoint a commission of six, "pour former le conseil auquel vous presiderez et pour accélérer les inventaires de tous les effets" (5) On the following day they met to discuss the situation in Madras and a despatch was sent to La Bourdonnais informing him that he was subject to the authority of the Governor and Superior Council and furthermore, that the Council had passed a resolution, "que la rançon....n'est qu'un avantage momentané...que tous les hôtages que vous pouvez avoir, n'engagent pas la Compagnie d'accepter les billets que vous donnera le Gouverneur qui étant prisonnier actuellement dira lorsqu'il sera en liberté qu'il a fait à ce sujet tout ce que vous aurez voulu pour se tirer des fers." (6)

Before these despatches arrived in Madras La Bourdonnais had written to Dupleix stating that he had decided to ransom the city. He pointed out that he had not received any instructions from the Controller-General to raze Fort St. George and that in any case the operation was far too vast an undertaking. He outlined the terms of the treaty of ransom; he proposed to seize and put aboard his ships between 1700 and 1800 bales of merchandise, several thousand sacks of saltpetre and one half of the guns, munitions and tools in the fort. The Governor and Council of Madras had agreed to pay a ransom of 1,200,000 gold pagodas (7) for the city. Six hostages—two of the councillors and their wives and two of the Governor's children—had been handed over to the French. (8)

On 26 September the despatches from Pondicherry reached Madras. La Bourdonnais wrote immediately to Dupleix informing him that the treaty of ransom had been completed, (9) although in fact it had not been signed. He addressed another despatch to the Superior Council in which he stated that as the conqueror of Madras he had the sole right to negotiate with the English Council. "Je sais que tous les établissements Français dans l'Inde sont de la dépendance de M. le Gouverneur-General et du Conseil Supérieur," he wrote, "Je sais aussi que le Roi et le Ministre....m'ont laissé le maître de mes opérations. Madras n'est certainement pas une colonie Française mais une conquête que je viens de faire. Ainsi personne n'a droit d'y commander que moi." (10)

(1) Mémoire (1750) P.J. La Bourdonnais to Dupleix. 24 September, 1746. p. 93.

(2) Ibid. p. 93.

(3) Mémoire (1750) p. 85.

(4) Mémoire (1750) P.J. La Bourdonnais to Dupleix 24 September, 1746. p. 93-94.

(5) Ibid. Dupleix to La Bourdonnais, 25 September, 1746. p. 102; The Superior Council of Pondicherry to La Bourdonnais, 25 September, 1746. p. 103-4.

(6) Ibid. Superior Council of Pondicherry to La Bourdonnais. 25 September, p. 103-104.

(7) This figure which is given in the Mémoire (1750) may be a misprint or alternatively the final figure of 1,100,000 pagodas may have been decided at a later date.

(8) Mémoire (1750) P.J. La Bourdonnais to Dupleix. 26 September, 1746. p. 97. In this despatch La Bourdonnais put forward a plan to remain in Indian waters with three ships of his own squadron and three other ships which had arrived from France. The ships were to attack the British squadron and return to France in January.

(9) Ibid. La Bourdonnais to Dupleix. 26 September, 1746. p. 100.

(10) Mémoire (1750) p. 87-88

This assertion by La Bourdonnais of complete independence could be justified in a number of ways. Firstly, in accordance with the rules of warfare in the eighteenth century, a general who was in charge of an army which captured a city had the right to dispose of all private goods in that city. Secondly, La Bourdonnais had reason on his side when he insisted that speed was essential; the French forces were not strong enough either to hold the city against a counter-attack or to raze it to the ground. Speed moreover was essential because the Monsoon was approaching. Thirdly, according to the instructions which he had received in 1740, he was forbidden to retain conquests made on Indian soil. Finally, his prognostication that Madras would be handed back to the English at the end of the war proved correct.

On the other hand La Bourdonnais had planned the operation in concert with Dupleix and he had constantly asked Dupleix and the Superior Council for advice. It is true that the latter refused to accept joint responsibility for the expedition but it is obvious that La Bourdonnais was not acting in the best interests of the Company or of the French government when he decided to set up a rival government to that of Pondicherry. The Controller-General had asked him to act in agreement with Dupleix (1) but shortly after his arrival in Pondicherry La Bourdonnais assumed honours which were normally reserved for the Governor. During his sojourn in India it appears that he deliberately acted in a provocative manner in order to assert his absolute independence.

The two councillors from Pondicherry who had been nominated to serve on the new council in Madras arrived on 26 September. They were Dulaurent and Barthelemy. They had received instructions to cooperate with La Bourdonnais in setting up a Provincial Council in the city. La Bourdonnais was to preside at the meeting of the council; the other members in addition to Dulaurent and Barthelemy were to be Paradis, the commander of the troops from Pondicherry, Despremesnil, a commissioner appointed by Dupleix when the squadron first sailed, and the two commissioners appointed by La Bourdonnais, Bonneau and Desforges-Boucher. (2)

Dissention had already broken out between the three commissioners. On 20 September Despremesnil informed Dupleix that the brother of La Bourdonnais, Mahé de la Villebague, had transported a considerable amount of plunder from the villas on the outskirts of Madras to St. Thomé, where it had been put aboard the Marie-Vertrude. (3) When Fort St. George surrendered, the keys of the treasury were given to de la Villebague who kept them for several hours. (4) Bonneau and Despremesnil had been appointed commissioners for the treasury and when de la Villebague handed over the keys to them they were returned to La Bourdonnais together with a letter of resignation from Bonneau. (5) Despremesnil then wrote to Pondicherry advising Dupleix to come in person to Madras, (6) and shortly afterwards he, too, resigned. Paradis who had already quarrelled with La Bourdonnais returned to Pondicherry on 23 September. (7)

Thus by 26 September the work of making inventories of the coin and bullion, merchandise, arms and ammunition in Madras had virtually

(1) Mémoire (1750) P. J. Orry to La Bourdonnais. 29 January, 1746. p. 10.

(2) Bonneau was a member of the Superior Council of Ile de France. Desforges-Boucher was probably a captain in the garrison of Ile de France.

(3) Cultru. Dupleix. p. 213.

(4) Mémoire. 1750) p. 229-230; Mémoire (1750) S. P. J. De la Villebague to La Bourdonnais. 25 October, 1743. p. 5. In an interview with Savage, a councillor from Madras, which took place on 21 August, 1747, Dupleix was informed that the treasury contained 18 boxes of piastres when the city fell. Dupleix stated that 6 boxes had been found there in October 1746. Forrest. Clive. Vol II. p. 463.

(5) Mémoire (1750) S. P. J. p. 5-6.

(6) Cultru. Dupleix. p. 214.

(7) Mémoire (1750) P. J. La Bourdonnais to Dupleix. 26 September, 1746. p. 93.

come to a halt. Bonneau and Despremesnil had resigned. The former, hitherto a close associate of La Bourdonnais, made such outspoken criticisms of the latter's conduct that he was arrested but shortly afterwards he escaped to Pondicherry. (1) De la Villebague and Desjardins, an officer in the squadron, received orders from La Bourdonnais to take over the duties of the two commissioners who had resigned and a letter was sent to Duplex asking for assurances that they would not be victimised for obeying the order. (2)

On 27 September, Dulaurent, Barthelemy and Despremesnil submitted a formal protest to La Bourdonnais reminding him that the Council of Pondicherry would not accept a treaty which was negotiated independently, "Nous protestons," they wrote, "au nom du Roi et de la Compagnie contre toute capitulation que vous pourrez faire ou avoir faite, et nous nous opposons formellement aux dits noms que la ville de Madras soit rendu aux Anglais" (3) On the following day they issued an announcement to the officers in the city to the effect that the supreme authority in Madras was the Superior Council of Pondicherry (4) and two days later they presented a second protestation informing La Bourdonnais that they were withdrawing to St. Thomé. (5)

La Bourdonnais received a despatch from the superior Council on 30 September in which they stated their opposition to the policy of restoring Madras to the English. They asserted that Duplex had never proposed that Madras should be razed to the ground, "mais bien de la démanteler et tout ce qui appartient à la Compagnie d'Angleterre," and they suggested that La Bourdonnais should hand over his command to Despremesnil. Finally they warned him that they would not accept hostages or bills of exchange from Madras. (6) This despatch was accompanied by a personal letter from Duplex in which he begged La Bourdonnais to reconsider his decision. (7)

A public protest was drafted in Pondicherry on 29 September and the leading inhabitants of the city were invited to sign. On the next day it was presented to Duplex. The remonstrance contained proposals to send a deputation to Madras to enforce the decisions of the Superior Council, to reembark the troops from Ile de France and Bourbon and to annul the treaty of ransom. (8) A special commission, composed of Major-General de Bury, Bruyère, the Procurer-General, and Paradis, received instructions to proceed to Madras. They carried proclamations, which they were ordered to read in public, announcing that the treaty of ransom was null and void (9) and that Despremesnil had been appointed commandant of Madras, "pour en cette qualité à commander... tant aux officiers de terre que de mer, habitants du dit lieu, comme de la dite Compagnie et à tous autres Français et étrangers qui y sont établis." (10) Finally they were empowered to set up a Provincial Council under the presidency of Despremesnil. (11)

The commissioners arrived at St. Thomé on 2 October and accompanied by Despremesnil, Dulaurent and Barthelemy, they made their way to Fort St. George. (12) They entered the council chamber and de Bury handed La Bourdonnais a letter which stated that he had been authorized by the Superior Council to reply to a despatch from La Bourdonnais dated 27

(1) Mémoire (1750) P.J. Bonneau to La Bourdonnais. 28 September, 1746. p. 116-22.

(2) Mémoire (1750) p. 89, 103.

(3) Mémoire (1750) P.J. Formal protest. p. 111-112.

(4) Ibid. p. 116.

(5) Ibid. p. 127-128.

(6) Ibid. The Superior Council of Pondicherry to La Bourdonnais. 28 September, p. 124-126.

(7) Ibid. Duplex to La Bourdonnais. 29 September, 1746. p. 130-134.

(8) Ibid. Remonstrance Faite par la Colonie de Pondicherry à M. Duplex. p. 142-5.

(9) Ibid. p. 147.

(10) Ibid. Lettre circulaire aux principaux officiers. 30 September. p. 146-147.

(11) Ibid. p. 147-152.

(12) In the Mémoire (1750) p. 93-94 it is asserted that they addressed a party of soldiers who were on guard and attempted to sway their allegiance by promises of prize money.

September, in which the latter announced that the treaty had been signed and that it was essential for him to leave Madras immediately owing to the approach of the monsoon. (1) The protest and the declarations and orders from the Superior Council were read aloud before a large crowd which had gathered in the chamber.

In his reply La Bourdonnais pointed out that he held an independent command and that the Superior Council could not issue orders in Madras. The commissioners challenged this assertion and a quarrel ensued. (2) Finally La Bourdonnais and his officers left the council chamber and a council of war was held in an adjoining room. La Bourdonnais explained that he was committed to a policy of ransoming Madras and his officers agreed that he could not go back on his word. "Nous n'hésitâmes pas," wrote Rostaing, "à lui déclarer qu'il y était obligé, nous ajoutâmes que s'il avait inconsidérément ou mal à propos engagé son souverain, il en répondrait seul en son propre nom." (3) La Bourdonnais then returned to the council chamber and informed the commissioners from Pondicherry that his officers had given him a vote of confidence.

The commissioners probably intended to appeal to the troops from Pondicherry to enforce their orders but on 4 October La Bourdonnais issued instructions to station these troops aboard the ships. He explained that this measure was necessary because English ships had been seen off Pulicat but the real motive was to remove the Pondicherry contingent from Madras. (4) On the same day, de Bury, accompanied by two officers, visited La Bourdonnais and forbade him to leave Madras without first obtaining instructions from Dupleix. La Bourdonnais put them under arrest and when Paradis arrived on the scene he too was arrested. (5) Shortly afterwards they were released.

La Bourdonnais had told Dupleix that he could not break his word of honour to the English and on 4 October he asked the latter to appoint commissioners to help de la Villebague and Desjardins to complete the inventories of merchandise. In addition he asked for several small craft to help in loading the ships and also for a fresh supply of rice. (6) The attitude of the deputies from Pondicherry had determined La Bourdonnais to adopt a new line of policy. He realised that if he handed the city over to the Superior Council on 15 October without first obtaining ratification of the treaty of ransom the capitulation would be annulled and all his plans destroyed. (7) The Superior Council was resolved to prevent him from sailing on 15 October and therefore he asked Paradis to open negotiations with Dupleix as to whether the latter would agree to ratify the treaty of ransom provided that the evacuation of Madras were postponed until January or February of the following year. Dupleix approved of the idea and on 7 October he wrote to La Bourdonnais suggesting that 150 soldiers from the squadron should be left in Madras to strengthen the troops from Pondicherry, that Bonneau and Desforges should join the Provincial Council, "et le reste se réglât sur le pied que vous l'auriez arrêté avec M^s. les Anglais!" (8)

(1) Mémoire (1750) P.J. La Bourdonnais to the Superior Council of Pondicherry. 27 September, 1746. p. 112-114.
(2) Ibid. Procès Verbal des Députés de Pondicherry. p. 155-156.
(3) Rostaing. Expédition. p. 423. Rostaing, however, refused to sign the treaty of ransom. "Je lui dis que mon approbation était inutile dans une affaire où je n'avais pas été consulté." p. 422; Mémoire (1750) P.J. La Bourdonnais to Dupleix. 4 October, 1746. p. 162-163.
(4) Mémoire (1750) P.J. The Provincial Council in Madras to La Bourdonnais. 4 October, 1746. p. 172-173.
(5) Ibid. The Superior Council of Pondicherry to La Bourdonnais. 6 October, 1746. p. 183-189.
(6) Ibid. La Bourdonnais to Dupleix. 4 October, 1746. p. 163-164.
(7) Ibid. Protestation. 6 October, 1746. p. 177-178. The Council of Madras sent this protest to Dupleix verifying the assertion of La Bourdonnais that a promise had been made to restore Madras.
(8) Ibid. Dupleix to La Bourdonnais. 7 October, 1746. p. 190.

The Centaure, the Mars and the Brillant, which had left France in previous year, anchored off Pondicherry on 8 October. They carried despatches from the Company which stated clearly that La Bourdonnais was under the obligation to obey orders from the Superior Council of Pondicherry. Furthermore Dupleix was informed that the Controller-General, Orry, had been dismissed and that de Fulvy was in disgrace. This news was communicated to La Bourdonnais together with several despatches from the Company and also from Orry. (1) The news came as a severe blow to La Bourdonnais but in a letter to Dupleix dated 10 October he mentioned that he had received a despatch from Orry and that the orders, contained in it, "ne détruisent en rien mes précédens ordres." (2) In the same letter he referred to the new instructions from the directors but he insisted that he was subject only to orders from the French government. "Vous pouvez compter," he wrote, "que je ne conformerai toujours aux ordres du ministre quand je les aurai reçus. Il ne me croit plus ici et l'extract que vous m'envoyez regarde les capitaines des vaisseaux de la Compagnie et non moi." (3)

On 11 October La Bourdonnais sent a despatch to Pondicherry in which he outlined the conditions under which he would transfer Madras to the Superior Council. The despatch also contained plans for the reorganisation of the French squadron. (4) On the following day he sent another despatch to Dupleix in which he repeated that he was anxious to sail from Madras before the monsoon broke. (5) The negotiations between La Bourdonnais and the Superior Council were doomed to failure, however, because Dupleix and the councillors would neither agree to evacuate Madras by 1 January, 1747, nor would they accept La Bourdonnais' plan to keep the Madras roadstead open to English shipping. (6) But before the despatches reached La Bourdonnais a cyclone struck Madras and the French squadron was seriously damaged.

A strong northerly wind began to blow on 12 October and on the following day La Bourdonnais gave instructions to the captains in his squadron to prepare to put out to sea in the event of a storm. (7) During the evening of 13 October a storm sprang up. The ships in the squadron put out to sea (8) and when day broke the harbour was quite empty. The storm grew worse and on 14 October look-out parties were sent along the coast road to search for ships in distress and in the afternoon, when the wind dropped, several large rafts put out to sea to ascertain the whereabouts of the French ships. At 8 pm. on the evening of 14 October La Bourdonnais was informed that an English prize, the Marie-Gertrude, had sunk and that the Achille and the Bourbon had been badly damaged. (9) On the following day he learned that the Duc d'Orleans had sunk.

(1) Mémoire (1750) Dupleix to La Bourdonnais. 8 October, 1746. p. 197-198.

(2) Ibid. La Bourdonnais to Dupleix. 10 October, (11 pm.) 1746. p. 199.

(3) Ibid. La Bourdonnais to Dupleix. 10 October, (a.m.) 1746. p. 199. The extract from the Company's instructions reads as follows: "La Compagnie juge qu'il est convenable et même décent, que le Commandant des escadres assiste dans les Conseils Supérieurs; qu'il y soit appelé lorsqu'il s'y traitera des matières concernant quelques expéditions militaires, où ce commandant doit avoir la plus grande part; qu'il y est voix délibérative, mais elle entend aussi que tout ce qu'on y aura délibéré, soit exécuté sans difficulté de quelque nature d'affaire dont il s'agisse quand même il serait question de disposer de tous les vaisseaux de la compagnie qu'il commanderait." Dupleix to La Bourdonnais. 8 October, 1746. p. 197.

(4) Ibid. La Bourdonnais to Dupleix. 11 October, 1746. p. 201-205.

(5) Ibid. La Bourdonnais to Dupleix. 12 October, 1746. p. 206-207.

(6) Ibid. Dupleix to La Bourdonnais. 12 October, 1746. p. 216-217; the Superior Council of Pondicherry to La Bourdonnais. 13 October, 1746. p. 219-221.

(7) Ibid. Instruction. 13 October, 1746. p. 207-208.

(8) All the ships save the Renommé, the Lys and the St. Louis, which had all been sent to Pondicherry, were in the harbour.

(9) Mémoire (1750) P.J. La Bourdonnais to Dupleix. 14 October, 1746. p. 211.

On 17 October the weather moderated and the full extent of French losses at sea was made known. The Achille, the Bourbon, the Neptune and the Princesse Marie had lost most of their masts; many of their guns had been jettisoned and their cargoes were irreparably damaged. The Marie-Gertrude, the Duc d'Orleans and the Phénix had been lost; the Advice had run aground and a high proportion of the soldiers from Pondicherry, who had been put aboard the ships, were drowned, together with the crews. The losses in troops and ships' crews probably exceeded 1,000 men. (1)

A despatch from Pondicherry arrived on 16 October informing La Bourdonnais that the Superior Council was unwilling to accept the treaty of ransom on the conditions named by him in the despatch dated 12 October. (2) La Bourdonnais, however, was of the opinion that further negotiations were out of the question. On the same day he decided to sign the treaty of ransom without any further amendments. He had forwarded a copy of this document to Dupleix on 12 October. He informed the councillors that he intended, "de vous laisser copie de la capitulation pour vous abandonner la terre pour me donner tout entier à sauver les débris de nos pertes par mer." (3) On 18 October he informed the Superior Council that he had made the final arrangements to hand over Madras to Despremesnil, "à la seule condition de garder la capitulation," but he added, "si vous en jugerez autrement vous êtes maître de suivre sans scrupule votre façon de penser; ce n'est plus mon affaire." (4)

The treaty was read in the council chamber of Fort St. George on 21 October in French and English and signed by La Bourdonnais, Morse and five members of the Council of Madras. In a note in the mémoire (1750) it is asserted by La Bourdonnais that, "ce seconde acte n'est qu'une explication indispensable de la capitulation accordée le 21 Septembre." (5) But an examination of the clauses of the treaty of 21 October reveals the fact that the capitulation of 21 September had been interpreted in a surprisingly generous manner. (6) A substantial proportion of the munitions, naval stores and food supplies in the city was to be handed back to the English. The personal belongings of the inhabitants, including private stores of merchandise, were not only to be safeguarded from seizure but also to be exempt from the payment of ransom, "les ayant exemptés de pillage par pure politesse et générosité." (7) Furthermore the Superior Council was committed to a policy of adherence to the treaty on terms which they had formally rejected.

It was generally believed in Pondicherry at this time that La Bourdonnais had accepted a substantial bribe from the English as the price of a treaty of ransom. (8) When La Bourdonnais was a prisoner in the Bastille, two of the witnesses for the prosecution, Despremesnil and Kerjean stated that they had heard rumours of the payment of a bribe. The former asserted that he had been told by Dupleix that an Englishman from Madras had told the latter that La Bourdonnais had received 100,000 gold pagodas. He pointed out, however, that he, personally, had not

(1) Mémoire (1750) P.J. La Bourdonnais to Dupleix 17 October, 1746. p. 223-7. Three of the ships, the Marie Gertrude, the Advice and the Princesse-marie were captured English ships.
(2) Ibid. Superior Council of Pondicherry to La Bourdonnais. 13 October, 1746 p. 219-221.
(3) Ibid. Superior Council of Pondicherry, ^{to La Bourdonnais} 16 October, 1746. p. 221.
(4) Ibid. La Bourdonnais to the Superior Council of Pondicherry 18 October, 1746. p. 231-232.
(5) Ibid. S.F.J. Note (a) p. 18.
(6) See appendix 1
(7) Mémoire (1750) S.F.J. Treaty of ransom. Article 13 p. 24.
(8) Private diary of Ananda Ranga Pillai. Vol II p. 377, 389; Vol III. p. 20-21.

been able to verify the accusation. Kerjean gave evidence that a Jew who had left Madras and settled in Pondicherry had been asked to pay 7000 pagodas as his share of a bribe of 100,000 pagodas. (1)

In the Mémoire, written whilst he was in the Bastille, La Bourdonnais denied these charges although he did admit accepting several gifts from European and Armenian merchants in Madras. He asserted that their total value did not exceed 15,000 livres. (2) "Dans l'Inde," he wrote, "on est dans l'usage de faire des présents qui sont en place et que les présents forment le plus clair de tout le bénéfice que les gouverneurs retirent de leur gouvernement." (3) He justified his acceptance of the gifts by pointing out that the merchandise and personal effects of the donors had been spared from pillage. "Est-il étonnant," he wrote, "que des gens fort riches, dont toute la fortune avait été sauvée du pillage, donnassent à un vainqueur qui les traitait si bien ces faibles marques de leur reconnaissance?" (4)

La Bourdonnais asserted that the accusations of bribery rested on flimsy evidence. He pointed out that there had been a rumour current in Pondicherry before he sailed for Madras that he had accepted a bribe of 200,000 gold pagodas from the English Company to abandon the attack on the factory. (5) He explained that the witnesses were unreliable; Despremesnil was the son-in-law, and Kerjean the nephew, of Duplex. Turning to the charge that he had received a bribe, La Bourdonnais stated that on the day of his departure from Madras the Council had given a banquet at which it was intended to present him with a gift of money but he had left the city before the banquet was held. (6) He expressed the view that even if he had accepted a bribe he would have been morally obliged to repay it when the evacuation of Madras was postponed to January, 1747. Furthermore, the English knew that the Superior Council of Pondicherry was opposed to a treaty of ransom and therefore, La Bourdonnais asserted, they could not have been expected to offer a bribe for a treaty which might well be broken. Finally, La Bourdonnais pointed out that when the treaty was declared null and void the English had not divulged the terms of any private arrangement and he described the cordial reception he had been accorded in London in 1748 - a reception which would not have been given to a traitor. (7)

It was impossible to prove the charges against La Bourdonnais because the members of the Council of Madras who were in England at the time refused to give evidence in Paris, as did the directors of the East India Company. In February, 1751, the Commissaires du Chambre de l'Arsenal pronounced a verdict of not guilty and two days later the 'lettre de cachet' was annulled and La Bourdonnais was allowed to leave the Bastille. Although the charges against La Bourdonnais were revived by several writers (8) it was not until 1867 that an English writer, G. B. Malleon, made known the existence of certain documents (Law Case, No. 21, 3 March, 1752) in the Library of India House which, "show that the directors of that day were convinced, on the testimony of Madras members of Council, that La Bourdonnais was promised by bond, 100,000 pagodas (about £40,000) over and above the 1,000,000 pagodas stipulated in the bond given him for public use, in consideration of his restoring Madras to the English." (9)

(1) Mémoire (1750) p. 268; Forrest, Clive. Vol I. p. 461-463.

(2) Ibid. p. 267.

(3) Ibid. p. 267.

(4) Ibid. p. 266-267.

(5) Ibid. p. 255.

(6) Ibid. p. 268-269.

(7) Ibid. p. 271-274.

(8) Notably in Grose's East Indies, Vol II p. 29 and in Mill's India, 5th edition. Vol. III. p. 37-38. See Malleon, French in India p. 157.

(9) Malleon, French in India. p. 157.

The Company officials in Madras who signed the treaty of ransom were all substantial merchants whose main interest lay in their private trading ventures and it is almost certain that they came to some financial agreement with La Bourdonnais in order to safeguard their stores. In the Mémoire (1750) La Bourdonnais admitted that he had received a number of gifts from merchants in Madras, "dont toute la fortune avait été sauvé du pillage," and he even expressed the opinion that had he accepted a money gift from the Council on the day of his departure, his action would have been in conformity with accepted standards of behaviour in India. By the terms of the treaty the English merchants in Madras, including the officials of the Company who were trading privately, were exempt from the payment of ransom because their merchandise was included in the assessment of 1,100,000 pagodas (for all the merchandise in the city) which was to be paid by the East India Company. (1)

If the treaty had remained in its original form the English East India Company, by paying the ransom, would legally have had the right to claim ownership of all private goods in the city on 21 October and ultimately they would have levied some kind of tax in Madras in order to recover a proportion of the ransom. However, after the departure of La Bourdonnais the treaty was annulled and all private stores of merchandise were confiscated by Paradis. The officials of the English Company later tried to arrange for the payment of compensation by the Company. In an enquiry held in 1752 they informed the directors that La Bourdonnais had demanded 100,000 gold pagodas as the price of a treaty (2) and that the money, or a large proportion of it, had been paid in gold, pearls, diamonds and gold pagodas in several instalments before 12 October. (3) The Governor of Madras, Nicholas Morse, stated, "that no receipt was taken or required for the money privately paid nor was any agreement made for returning the 88,000 pagodas in case the treaty was rejected by the Governor and Council of Pondicherry." (4)

There is always the possibility that the English officials in Madras invented the story in order to recover at least a proportion of their losses from the English East India Company. It is clear that the gold, jewels and pagodas which, it was asserted, had been handed over to La Bourdonnais were the private property of merchants and officials in Madras and not the property of the East India Company and later some of the merchants complained against Morse and the Council because after having contributed, "with their most clear and portable property," they had subsequently lost everything. (5) But the facts remain that a solemn promise to ransom the city was not made until several days after the signing of the capitulation of 21 September, during which time La Bourdonnais may have been negotiating for a bribe as the condition of sparing the city. Moreover, La Bourdonnais agreed to ransom the city although Dupleix and the Superior Council had advised him to destroy Fort St. George. In addition the terms of the treaty of 21 October were exceptionally mild. It is true that in 1741 La Bourdonnais received instructions from Orry forbidding him to make permanent conquests in India and that he himself was convinced that the French government would return Madras to the English Company when hostilities ceased, but there can be little doubt that he was offered a bribe and that he accepted it. (6)

(1) Mémoire (1750) p. 184. La Bourdonnais stated that the commander of the expedition to Louisburg had included private merchandise in the ransom.
 (2) Crépin. La Bourdonnais. Note I. p. 265.
 (3) Ibid. p. 262; Moubaud. La Bourdonnais. p. 219-225.
 (4) Ibid. p. 261. The figure of 88,000 pagodas is presumably the amount which it was asserted had been paid by 12 October, 1746.
 (5) Forrest. Clive. Vol I. p. 463.
 (6) Herpin and Crépin believe that the evidence is so slight that the problem must remain unsolved. The latter concludes, "Malgré tous les arguments... il est impossible d'affirmer qu'il ait reçu 100,000 pagodes... l'affaire de Madras restera toujours entourée d'un certain mystère" p 469.

Sir George Forrest, in his biography of Clive, writes; "The chief accusation brought against La Bourdonnais is that he received a large sum of money from the English to conclude an unauthorized treaty for the ransom of Madras, and little doubt can exist from the evidence that he was guilty of the charge." (1) Whilst the author was collecting material for the biography in Pondicherry he met a French lawyer who told him that the Archives contained evidence that La Bourdonnais took a bribe. The lawyer obtained a copy of a letter dated 21 August, 1747, in which is described a conversation between Dupleix and Savage, formerly a councillor in Madras; an official named Friell, who had been summoned by Dupleix to act as interpreter, recorded the conversation. (2) At the interview Dupleix asked Savage to divulge how much Marse and the Council of Madras had given to La Bourdonnais. After much persuasion Savage agreed to speak about the bribe on condition that Dupleix and Friell gave their word of honour not to reveal where they had obtained their information. Dupleix and Friell accepted these terms whereupon Savage informed them that the treaty of ransom contained a secret article by which the Council agreed to give La Bourdonnais one lac (100,000) of pagodas to save the town from pillage and to secure private property from seizure. Savage stated that La Bourdonnais had received from 85,000 to 90,000 pagodas in gold, silver and jewels and that the entire sum would have been paid if the latter had remained in Madras for one day longer. The greater part of the bribe had been levied from Englishmen in Madras although some Malabar merchants asserted that they had been forced to contribute.

From 18-22 October La Bourdonnais had supervised the refitting of the squadron. He proposed to return to Pondicherry with the Bourbon, the Achille, the Neptune and the Princesse Marie, which were all barely sea-worthy, and later to sail to Ile de France with the Centaure, the St. Louis and the Lys. He suggested to the Superior Council that the Mars and the Brillant should be sent to refit at Achem and then to return with the Achille to Madras. However, at a special meeting of the Superior Council, which was held on 22 October, it was decided to send the six ships which were anchored off the town to Achem under the command of Dordelin. (4) On 23 October La Bourdonnais ordered the troops to assemble in Fort St. George. He transferred his command to Despremesnil and shortly afterwards he went aboard the Achille and the squadron set sail for Pondicherry. During the voyage he sighted Dordelin's squadron and he ordered the commander to return with him to Pondicherry. (5)

The ships anchored off Pondicherry on 27 October. La Bourdonnais remained aboard the Achille. Further negotiations were carried out regarding the disposal of the French fleet and it was finally decided to divide the fleet into two squadrons; one composed of the Centaure, the St. Louis, the Mars and the Brillant, under the command of Dordelin, the other, composed of the Achille, the Lys and the Sumatra, (6) under the command of La Bourdonnais. The two squadrons were to make for Achem and if the ships arrived safely, the Lys and the Sumatra were to be refitted, and sent to the Isles. The rest of the squadron was to be refitted, after which the ships were to sail to Pulicat to await orders from the Superior

- 1) Forrest. Clive. Vol. I. p. 45-46.
- 2) The letter was signed by Dupleix and Friell who swore to the truth of its contents. Later the letter was shown to Paradis who certified that he had given his word not to divulge the contents.
- 3) Forrest. Clive. Vol. I. p. 461-463.
- 4) Mémoire (1750) S.P.J. Délibération du Conseil Supérieur. 22 October, 1746. p. 40-44; La Bourdonnais to the Superior Council of Pondicherry. 27 October, 1746. p. 54-56.
- 5) Ibid. p. 44-54.
- 6) The Sumatra had recently arrived from Ile de France.

Council of Pondicherry. If, however, the damaged ships were unable to reach Achem La Bourdonnais was to sail to Ile de France. (1)

The ships left Pondicherry on 29 October and shortly afterwards La Bourdonnais decided to change course and make for Ile de France. The Achille arrived in Port Louis on 10 December, 1746; two days later the Sumatra and probably the Lys anchored in the harbour. (2) A new Governor, Félix Barthelemy David (3) had recently arrived in the island with special instructions to conduct a commission of enquiry into the administration of his predecessor. La Bourdonnais remained in the island for nearly three months and it appears that very few of the colonists came forward with complaints about his administration. (4)

Meanwhile Dupleix and the Superior Council had annulled the treaty of ransom and begun operations to drive the English from the Coromandel Coast. Some time before the departure of La Bourdonnais the Nawab had sent his son, Maphuz Khan, and ten thousand troops to the outskirts of Madras. Dupleix ordered Despremesnil to retain the city and to foster friendly relations with the Nawab's troops but when Maphuz Khan interfered with the water supply Despremesnil led an attack and on 2 November, 1746, the Nawab withdrew. Two days later a relief force from Pondicherry under the command of Paradis attacked Maphuz Khan who retreated to Arcot.

On 7 November, 1746, the Superior Council announced that the treaty of ransom was null and void, "et que la Nation Française se trouve... dans le même état que le jour que la ville de Madras s'est rendue aux armes de Sa Majesté." (5) Despremesnil was replaced by Paradis who on 10 November called together the company officials and merchants of Madras and announced the new proposals. The terms of the new treaty were read. The inhabitants of Madras were ordered to hand over the keys to all private and public stores of merchandise and munitions although they were to be allowed to keep their personal effects and jewelry. In addition, all citizens were required to sign a declaration of loyalty to Louis XV or to leave Madras, in which case they were to take an oath not to engage in hostile action against the French. (6)

It appears that the greater part of the English merchants had left Madras either during the siege or shortly after the fall of the city; in the Mémoire (1750) La Bourdonnais estimated that there were between 25-30 merchants and officials in the city on the eve of his departure. (8) When the terms of the new treaty were made known many of the remaining English merchants and officers in the Company army, together with their wives and families, escaped to Fort St. David. In mid-November the Governor and members of the Council of Madras were arrested; seals were placed on the houses of English officials and merchants and orders were given to destroy the Black Town and the villas and other properties in the surrounding countryside. (9) During the next eighteen months Madras was the scene of a vast pillage.

On 19 December, 1746, de Pury led a French attack on Fort St. David. The attack failed but in January Dordelin's squadron arrived from Achem and in the following month the Nawab of the Carnatic withdrew from the war and sent his son to pay a state visit to Pondicherry. In March, 1747,

(1) Mémoire (1750) S.P.J. La Bourdonnais to the Superior Council of Pondicherry 28 October, 1746. p. 64-65.

(2) Rostaing. Expédition. p. 426.

(3) David, previously Governor of Senegal, was the son of a director of the Company. His appointment was not in any way connected with the Madras affair. The minutes of the Company register of 17 May, 1746 state: "M. La Bourdonnais ayant demandé à repasser en France et la permission lui en ayant été accordée pour le remplacer dans le gouvernement général des deux Iles, la Compagnie a nommé M. David." Lougnon. Correspondence. Vol IV. p. 222.

(4) Roubaud. La Bourdonnais. David to de Boisseuf. 5 March, 1749. p. 195-196.

(5) Mémoire (1750) p. 139.

(6) Ibid. p. 140.

(7) Ibid. p. 207.

(8) Ibid. p. 140.

Paradis led another attack on Fort St. David but he was forced to withdraw when an English Naval squadron appeared off the town. This squadron which was commanded by Admiral Griffin was joined in August 1748 by a fleet under the command of Admiral Boscawen. Pondicherry was besieged but two months later the English fleet left the Coromandel Coast owing to the approach of the Monsoon and the troops withdrew to Fort St. David. In December, 1748, news reached India that a peace treaty had been signed between England and France and in August, 1749, Fort St. George was handed over to Boscawen.

On 5 March, 1747, La Bourdonnais left Ile de France with his wife and children. His squadron, which consisted of six ships, was caught in a storm off the Cape of Good Hope; one of the ships was lost and another was forced to return to Ile de France. The four remaining ships made for Portuguese territory on the west coast of Africa and anchored in Luanda. The port was blockaded by an English squadron and La Bourdonnais decided to send his wife and children to Lisbon in a Portuguese ship. The French vessels managed to evade the English and sailed for the West Indies, arriving in Martinique possibly in September of that year. La Bourdonnais left Martinique on 15 October and sailed to Saint Gustache where he was given a Dutch passport. He left the island in a Dutch ship on 15 November. During the voyage the captain of a passing English vessel informed the Dutch captain that war had broken out between Holland and France. On 2 January, 1748, the ship anchored off Falmouth. Some days later La Bourdonnais was arrested. He travelled to London at the end of January and after a short period of imprisonment he was allowed to go free. During his sojourn in London he was presented to George II and to the Prince of Wales and he met some of the directors of the East India Company and two members of the Council of Madras. (1)

La Bourdonnais left London on 22 February having secured permission to return to France. He arrived in Paris on 25 February and later travelled to Versailles. It is probable that he had an audience with Maurepas and that the minister was dissatisfied with his explanation of his conduct in the recent events in Madras. On 1 March Maurepas wrote to Duval, the secretary of the Police Division, authorizing him to instruct certain agents to seize La Bourdonnais' papers and to take him to the Bastille. Late that night La Bourdonnais, who was staying at the Petit Hotel d'Entragnes in Paris, was interviewed by de Rochebrune, a Royal Councillor and a member of the Parlement of Paris, and a lawyer named d'Héméry. His rooms were searched and very early on the morning of 2 March he was taken to the Bastille in a closed coach. Although the Petit Hotel d'Entragnes was only a short distance from the Bastille the coachman had received instructions to make a long detour through the streets of Paris; a procedure which appealed to the eighteenth century mentality because it increased the atmosphere of secrecy and mystery.

When he arrived at the Bastille La Bourdonnais was introduced to the Governor, de Launay. The latter was presented with a lettre de cachet which stated: "M. de Launay, je vous fais cette lettre pour vous dire de recevoir dans mon chateau de la Bastille le sieur de la Bourdonnais, capitaine de frégate, et de l'y garder jusqu'au nouvel ordre de ma part. Sur ce je prie Dieu qu'il vous ait M. de Launay, en sa sainte Garde." La Bourdonnais' possessions were confiscated and he was taken to a large room in the Tour de la Chapelle. Later he was transferred to the Tour du Coin. He had several attacks of apoplexy during the early period of his imprisonment. He was nursed back to health and in May, 1750, he was given permission to exercise in the courtyard of the Tour du Coin. The daily menus which were served to La Bourdonnais during three months of 1750 have survived and they indicate that he enjoyed luxurious living.

(1) Mémoire (1750) p. 150-153; La Bourdonnais to Maurepas, Falmouth, 20 January, 1748. Mauritius Archives. Boz Y2/23. Photostat copy from French National Archives. A.N. Mar. C. 192.

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On 7 March, 1748, a commission of enquiry was set up to examine the charges against La Bourdonnais (1) After more than two years in the Bastille La Bourdonnais was allowed to take counsel. Pierre de Gennes, a member of the Parlement of Paris, assisted him in the preparation of the 'Mémoire Pour le Sieur de La Bourdonnais', which was published in 1750. (2) The members of the commission were divided among themselves and early in February, 1751, there were rumours in Paris that La Bourdonnais was to be hanged. On 2 February, however, a judicial commission, meeting in the Chambre de l'Arsenal decided by five votes to four that he was innocent. Two days later he left the Bastille and joined his wife who was living in the Rue d'Enfer. In November of the same year he purchased the chateau du Piple at Boissy St. Léger. In November, 1753, he had a heart attack whilst at St. Léger. He was carried back to Paris, where he died on 10 November. His will, dated 8 November, and the inventories of his vast private possessions prove that he died a very rich man. The Duc de Luynes estimated his fortune at four to five million livres. (3)

(1) The members were, Trudaine, des Voisins, de la Granville, de Courteille, (conseillers d'état); de Persan, Bignon, de Villeneuve, Bertin, St. Priest, de la Michaudière (maîtres des requêtes). The secretary was de Villeneuve. The Attorney-General was Lambert.

(2) See Bibliography.

(3) Further information on the last years of La Bourdonnais may be found in Recueil Trimestriel. Vol VI. L'arrestation, le procès et les dernières années de La Bourdonnais. (G. Baschet) p. 21-54.

CONCLUSION.

In assessing the work of La Bourdonnais, historians have placed undue emphasis on the Madras affair, the last, the most spectacular and the most controversial event of his career. This has meant that his work in other fields has been either forgotten or overlooked. Yet it is as a colonial administrator that he achieved his greatest success. In a *Mémoire* which he presented to Cossigny some twelve months after his arrival in Ile de France he wrote: "Je n'ai accepté ce gouvernement que pour avoir l'honneur de bien établir une colonie française. Voilà, Monsieur, la règle que je me suis prescrite et que j'ai pratiquée depuis mon arrivée. Tout est en paix; il n'y a pas eu la moindre discussion dans les îles, chacun sait son métier. Les ouvrages sont avancés, la colonie est devenue meilleure." (1) This claim is borne out by more concrete evidence. During the previous fourteen years, scarcely any progress had been made in Ile de France and although the directors bound La Bourdonnais to put economy and financial gain at the head of his programme, he created a well-equipped port, developed the food-growing capacity of the island and provided a regular supply of food for the slave population. Internal order was established, thus securing conditions favourable to an increase in the population. (2) Commenting on the success of La Bourdonnais' policy, the English geographer, Dalrymple, who visited Ile de France shortly before the outbreak of the Seven Years War, wrote: "From a wild and almost desert island M. La Bourdonnais has produced a flourishing and profitable settlement to the French Company and I am much afraid that port will give them greater advantage over us in India than we at present seem sensible of." (3)

It is impossible to review La Bourdonnais' career without becoming aware of the conditions which shaped his age. Overseas settlements were regarded as private estates of the Company and of the Mother Country; there was no conception of a national life and public responsibility; and the nobles who monopolised the higher offices in the Administration, the services and the Church took for granted their feudal privileges. The French East India Company attracted adventurers and men on the make and since emoluments were low, employees supplemented their salaries by the proceeds of private enterprise. The outlook of the Company and of its overseas servants was influenced by two factors peculiar to India, the vast wealth of the country and the realisation that European factories existed on a very precarious footing. These circumstances appear to have created a particularly unpleasant atmosphere in the factories themselves. In the 'Fragments sur l'Inde,' Voltaire wrote: "Les vaisseaux portaient de l'Inde moins chargés de marchandise que de délateurs, de calomniateurs, de faux témoins, de procès verbaux signés par le mensonge et soutenus en France par la corruption." (4) Judged by the standards of his time, La Bourdonnais was an outstanding servant of the Company and if he failed to resist the temptations of wealth and corruption, he was no more grasping or corrupt than his contemporaries.

(1) Crépin. La Bourdonnais. Note. p. 10.

(2) By 1741 about one eighth of the island had been cleared and there were 114 plantations.

(3) Recueil Trimestriel. Vol I. Ile de France in 1755. p. 418.

(4) Compare with Dalrymple's observations on Ile de France in 1755: "I found him (de Cossigny) disputing with the Governor and Council there as I had left others of his profession doing elsewhere, a misfortune the whole fraternity in India, I think, are fated to, and productive of the most fatal dangerous consequences everywhere." Recueil Trimestriel Vol I. p. 317.

As Dumas wrote, when he was Governor of the Isles: "L'établissement de la Compagnie était le temps de moissonner." (1)

La Bourdonnais' outlook was also in part determined by the circumstances of his early life and his years at sea and in the East. His roots in St. Malo went deep for his father and grandfather were merchants and seamen and as a boy he must have heard stories of the exploits of the corsaires of St. Malo. On his return from his first voyage as a cadet it is likely that he saw René Duguay-Trouin (1683-1736), the privateer who in 1711 captured and ransomed Rio de Janeiro. Seventeen years service aboard private merchant ships and ships of the 'première navigation' of the French East India Company gave him valuable experience in seamanship, in technical matters and in trading procedure, and, moreover, sharpened his acquisitive instincts. His resignation from the mercantile fleet of the Company in order to engage in private trading ventures reveals the merchant and adventurer in him, and his subsequent activities in the service of Portugal were possible undertaken as a means of exploring and opening up trade with East Africa. His urgent quest for employment in 1733 and 1734 was undoubtedly motivated by a desire to obtain a command in India, where opportunity was unlimited. The governorship of the Isles likewise offered ample scope for private trading and, moreover, might be regarded as the first step in obtaining a more lucrative command in India. As La Bourdonnais informed Orry: "Je vais rondement dans mes affaires. On ne vient aux Indes que pour en faire." (2)

La Bourdonnais' expectations were not disappointed. His wealth grew immeasurably between 1735 and 1740. In the marriage contract of 1733 his fortune was estimated at 300,000 livres; in 1740 it amounted to 900,000 livres. (3) When news of the war between England and Spain reached Ile de France in 1740, La Bourdonnais, who expected hostilities to spread, realised that the island was ideally situated for privateering activities and there can be little doubt that the squadron which he obtained in 1741, against the wishes of the directors, was intended by Orry and de Fulvy for this purpose, but the plan failed; the ships were ordered back to France and when in 1744 war finally broke out between France and England, the island squadron was scarcely sufficient for providing the Isles with food and slaves. The directors were either unable or unwilling to send another squadron until 1745. The expedition to Madras was essentially a private undertaking, though the issues were confused by the fact that La Bourdonnais held a commission in the French Navy, and after the fall of the city the real point in question between La Bourdonnais and the Superior Council of Pondicherry was the division of the spoils.

La Bourdonnais was primarily an experienced seaman, a commander, a man of action, and therefore he was at his best in the organisation of technical matters and in dealing with emergencies. He was interested in developing the sugar industry in Ile de France; two small factories were built and more efficient methods of crushing the cane were introduced. The speedy development of the N.W. Port was due almost entirely to his expert knowledge of harbour organisation and the requirements of ships of the 'première navigation'. These measures to provide essential harbour facilities were followed up by a modest shipbuilding programme and three frigates, a sloop and other smaller craft were built in the N.W. Port. The island squadron was expanded and reorganised and despite the constant shortage of ships vessels were found for carrying Bourbon coffee to ports in the Red Sea and the Persian Gulf. The fitting out of the squadron for the expedition to India in 1745 and 1746 illustrates La Bourdonnais'

(1) Cultru. p. 21.

(2) Mémoire. (1740) p. 60.

(3) Roderie. Les Bretons aux Iles. p. 170-171.

CONCLUSION.

In assessing the work of La Bourdonnais, historians have placed undue emphasis on the Madras affair, the last, the most spectacular and the most controversial event of his career. This has meant that his work in other fields has been either forgotten or overlooked. Yet it is as a colonial administrator that he achieved his greatest success. In a Mémoire which he presented to Cossigny some twelve months after his arrival in Ile de France he wrote: "Je n'ai accepté ce gouvernement que pour avoir l'honneur de bien établir une colonie française. Voilà, Monsieur, la règle que je me suis prescrite et que j'ai pratiquée depuis mon arrivée. Tout est en paix; il n'y a pas en la moindre discussion dans les îles, chacun sait son métier. Les ouvrages sont avancés, la colonie est devenue meilleure." (1) This claim is borne out by more concrete evidence. During the previous fourteen years, scarcely any progress had been made in Ile de France and although the directors bound La Bourdonnais to put economy and financial gain at the head of his programme, he created a well-equipped port, developed the food-growing capacity of the island and provided a regular supply of food for the slave population. Internal order was established, thus securing conditions favourable to an increase in the population. (2) Commenting on the success of La Bourdonnais' policy, the English geographer, Dalrymple, who visited Ile de France shortly before the outbreak of the Seven Years War, wrote: "From a wild and almost desert island M. La Bourdonnais has produced a flourishing and profitable settlement to the French Company and I am much afraid that port will give them greater advantage over us in India than we at present seem sensible of." (3)

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produced a number of sound reasons for accepting a treaty of ransom there can be little doubt that he took bribes from the English and that he accumulated a large amount of booty. After the capitulation of Madras and in the confusion that ensued, the temptation to make a private arrangement with the English was irresistible. La Bourdonnais felt himself to be master of the situation and his unsatisfactory relations with Dupleix and the Superior Council of Pondicherry made him all the more ready to assert his independence and to push to the extreme his personal advantage. He resented the unfair division of responsibility in carrying out the enterprise and saw no reason why he should leave the spoils for Dupleix and the councillors in Pondicherry.

It has been suggested that there was more in the quarrel between La Bourdonnais and Dupleix than personal pique, since both men advocated policies which inevitably brought them into conflict. It is true that La Bourdonnais had an inchoate idea of establishing French power in India by means of superiority at sea, whereas Dupleix wished to consolidate and expand French conquests through military and commercial treaties with Indian rulers, but there is no conclusive evidence of a quarrel based on strategical considerations. The expedition to Madras was originally planned by La Bourdonnais and Dupleix as a joint stock enterprise, "le seul moyen de nous dédommager de nos pertes"; the French government and the majority of the directors of the Company were unaware of the plan and when the city fell the vital question at issue was the division of spoils. That the plan did not work more harmoniously was due to personal enmity, kept alive by constant quarrels, warring ambition and extravagant pride.

La Bourdonnais was a small, stocky man, just over five feet in height, with deep-set brown eyes, bushy eyebrows and a fleshy face. His life at sea and his service with the Company, together with his ambitious spirit and passionate interest in material gain, left him with few principles. He was intelligent, hardworking, obstinate, acquisitive and restless. His prose is that of a man of action; like his contemporary, Clive, he wrote pungently and with vigour but, unlike Clive, he found it difficult to work in harmony with other men. His memoirs and despatches do not contain any friendly reference to his associates and his jealousy of outstanding subordinates was such that, when an engineer, Guyomar de Préandet, drew up a plan for the development of St. Denis, the project was vetoed. Positive virtues, which had sustained La Bourdonnais in a hazardous and exacting career, temerity, versatility and a flair for improvisation, made him impatient of other men's efforts.

Judged by his achievements alone, La Bourdonnais is assured of a permanent place in the history of human endeavour. As administrator, corsair and merchant, he was outstandingly successful. In Mauritius he is rightly regarded as the father of the colony and his statue in the Place d'Armes, in Port Louis, looks proudly out to sea. For the greater part of his career as a Company servant he justified the confidence shown in him by his patrons, Orry and Orry de Fulvy. He fulfilled certain private ambitions, amassing a vast fortune and becoming a person of consequence in French public life, but his ultimate goal, a command in India, was denied him. When he reached India in 1746 the scales were weighted heavily against him; he was serving three masters, the Crown, the Company and his own cupidity; his squadron was to remain for a limited period only in the Indian Ocean; he was surrounded by enemies and his judgement was blunted by illness, pride and by the comfortable belief that his patrons would defend his conduct in any eventuality. Madras surrendered too easily and the temptations were irresistible. In St. Malo, his birthplace, which honours the memory of Cartier, Duguay-Trouin and Surcouf, there is no statue to La Bourdonnais.

Appendix IZ. The Ransom Treaty of 21 October 1746.

The terms of the treaty were given in the Mémoire of 1750 in the Section, Suite des Pièces Justificatives No 1, pages 18-27. The preamble states that the treaty had been granted by La Bourdonnais to the Governor and Council of Madras. The first section contains 17 articles; the second section contains a list of the proposals which La Bourdonnais had submitted to the Superior Council of Pondicherry as a reasonable basis for adherence to the treaty. The preamble to the second section states that the Superior Council of Pondicherry had accepted these proposals in despatches dated 13 and 14 October, whereas, in fact, they had rejected two of them. A summary of the terms of the treaty is given below.

The Capitulation.

- Art. 1: Confirmation of the rights of the Roman Catholic Church in Madras.
- Art. 2: One half of the munitions in Madras are to be handed over to the French; the remainder to be at the disposal of the English.
- Art. 3: When La Bourdonnais has refitted his squadron the remainder of the naval stores etc. are to be divided between the French (the Superior Council of Pondicherry) and the English.
- Art. 4: When La Bourdonnais has completed the revictualling of the French squadron the remainder of the food is to be handed over to the English.
- Art. 5: All gold, silver and merchandise, belonging to the Company is to be handed over to the French.
- Art. 6: Madras is to be neutralised and evacuated in January, 1747.
- Art. 7: Three French commissioners are to remain in Madras in order to make an inventory of all merchandise etc.
- Art. 8: A ransom of 1,100,000 pagodas is to be paid in letters of credit drawn on the English Company to the value of 500,000 pagodas payable immediately (to La Bourdonnais); the remainder, 600,000 pagodas, is to be paid in regular instalments from 1747-1749.
- Art. 9: Eleven hostages are to be handed over by the Superior Council of Madras.
- Art. 10: All prisoners who elect to remain in Madras are at liberty to defend Madras against attack from local princes; those returning to Europe must not engage in war against the French.
- Art. 11. Fort St. George and the city are to be returned to the English (by January, 1747)
- Art. 12. All goods belonging to English men and other residents of the Black Town on 21 October are to be returned. (1)
- Art. 13. The houses, personal effects and furniture of the English residents are not liable to be seized for the payment of ransom, even though exempt from pillage.
- Art. 14. The fort and city are not to be attacked by the French, otherwise the present treaty is rendered null and void.
- Art. 15. The French squadron is to leave in October and hostages are to be handed over before the squadron sails.
- Art. 16. When the squadron leaves Madras the Council of Madras is to make a solemn promise to observe the terms of the treaty.
- Art. 17. French deserters are to be handed over; the command in Madras is to be transferred to Despremesnil.

(1) The meaning of this article is not clear since the Black Town had been sacked in September. The article probably refers to thefts which took place in houses reoccupied after 21 September.

The Terms under which the Superior Council of Pondicherry is prepared to adhere to the treaty.

- Art.1. The Superior Council of Pondicherry promises to adhere to the treaty, provided that the following articles are observed.
- Art.2. Madras is to be evacuated at the end of January, 1747, and French troops in the city are to be maintained at the expense of the English East India Company.
- Art.3. The English have the right to go about their normal course of business.
- Art.4. The Superior Council of Pondicherry is to accept all hostages and letters of credit as under article 8 of the treaty.
- Art.5. The harbour is to remain open to the ships of both nations; the guns in the city are to be used only in the event of an English naval attack on the city. When English ships are in the port not more than 30 officers and men are to be allowed on shore at any one time. If English warships capture French vessels in the Madras roadstead, compensation will be paid by the English Company. Any goods which belong to the French and which remain in Madras after 31 January are to be sent to Pondicherry.

Art 6

There follows a statement that the treaty has been concluded with the approval of the Superior Council of Pondicherry and that infringements of the treaty are answerable for to the king.