Think Like Beethoven: *Fidelio*, Lafayette and LaRouche—or, the Big Elephant in the Room

by David Shavin

In memory of Donald Phau

Prelude—Introduction—And the Composition in Four Movements:

I. The Story of the Lafayettes
II. The British Role—Whether 'Pizarro' Is William Pitt
III. Through Beethoven's Eyes
IV. *Fidelio*—Beethoven's Secular Mass for Humanity

Part I follows. Parts II-IV will appear in the next of issue of EIR.

This year, 2020, is indeed the occasion of the 250th birthday of Ludwig van Beethoven. A lot of his music is being performed. Many are being moved by forces deep within their being, reminding them of the depth and universality of their humanity—accompanied by a marked uptick of honest tears and laughter. That's lawful. However, Beethoven, similar to his colleague, Friedrich Schiller, viewed his creative work as even more, a moral mission with the power to effect necessary and permanent changes for good in their audiences. The question is posed: Might those temporary experiences of reconnecting to one's humanity transform the civilization's thinking from that of an adolescent to that of a mature adult. That is, it may be time to consider an appropriate birthday gift for the fellow.

Joseph-Désiré Court, 1834

Gilbert du Motier, Marquis de Lafayette

Adélaïde Labille-Guiard

Adrienne de Noailles, the Marquise de Lafayette

Willibrord Joseph Mähler

Ludwig van Beethoven

PRELUDE

Beethoven's First and Only Opera: *Fidelio, or Married Love*

Beethoven was a passionate and devout republican, nowhere better displayed than in his first and only opera, *Leonore, or Married Love*—later renamed *Fidelio*. The opera, we will show, demonstrates that he knew in the fiber of his being that the element of the soul that experiences a universal love was also the source of true statecraft, and also even of his powerful and concentrated capacity for the re-shaping of musical thought itself. In a word, he thought, as did Plato, in the realm where art and science are one, where the poetic meets the noëtic.

As such, the human race has, within itself, the power of creative mentation, capable of recognizing and addressing any and all problems it might need to face—whether it be backsliding feudal oligarchies, systemic financial gambling frauds, public health disasters, or, for that matter, an eventual burning out of the Sun. Beethoven both recognized and celebrated this Promethean quality of mankind.

In 1803, just prior to beginning his first opera, Beethoven's central focus was his revolutionary Third Symphony, known today as the "Eroica." At that time, in a messy political situation, Beethoven thought that Napoleon Bonaparte could be the great man capable of standing between a feudal Europe, and the mindless Jacobinism and terror of Danton, Marat, and Robespierre. His symphony was to be both dedicated to, and an intervention upon, Napoleon.

Joseph Sonnleithner, librettist of Beethoven's opera, Leonore.

At that time, Beethoven contracted with Emmanuel Schickaneder and his Theater an der Wien to write an opera. However, he was not satisfied with the libretto provided him and, instead, near the end of 1803, he decided upon Bouilly's *Leonore, ou L'amour conjugal*—a play based upon the outrageous imprisonment of Lafayette and the heroic, historic, and successful intervention of his wife, Adrienne, to save him. Beethoven's collaborator, Joseph Sonnleithner, prepared a German-language libretto.[1] Beethoven was excited, writing on January 4, 1804: "I have now quickly got an old French book edited and am now starting to work on it." His "Leonore" project was part and parcel of his thinking on his "Bonaparte" symphony project.

Tamino and Pamina from W.A. Mozart's opera, The Magic Flute*, portrayed in a fresco in the Vienna State Opera House.*

While Bonaparte, under pressure from America, had been instrumental in 1797 in getting Lafayette freed, he had also spent the next seven years assiduously keeping Lafayette out of French politics. Then in May 1804, Napoleon promoted himself from "First Consul" to "Emperor." Beethoven's close friend, Ferdinand Ries, who was the first to tell Beethoven the news, reported that Beethoven famously ripped out the title page with its dedication to Bonaparte, declaring: "So he is no more than a common mortal! Now, too, he will tread under foot all the rights of Man, indulge only his ambition; now he will think himself superior to all men, become a tyrant!" The symphony was eventually published, in 1806, as the *Eroica* with Beethoven's terse notation: "Composed to celebrate the memory of a great man."

Though Beethoven had already chosen, months earlier, the subject for his opera, now it became the center of his republican intervention into France and Europe. His opera was not about glorifying a celebrated figure, Lafayette, but about the actions of his wife, Adrienne—that is, it was about how an assumedly non-political figure makes history. And more importantly, it was about how the human emotion of love, one available to every human, is powerful enough to make history. It was not accidental that this was also the specific intervention that Mozart had attempted a dozen years before with his last opera, the *Magic Flute*—at the same Theater an der Wien, and for Schickaneder. Beethoven studied Mozart's *Magic Flute* in some detail while preparing his opera.

Adrienne and 'Married Love'

What has love got to do with it? The new republican form of government, as launched with the American Revolution and the 1787 Constitutional Convention, would be a sick joke, were it simply a matter of asking the passengers on the ship of state every four years what

1. Sonnleithner had first worked in the private office of Emperor Joseph II and, later, in the Austrian Chancellery. Of note, he had spent the previous three years on a tour of Europe, in search of rare old manuscripts for a music-publishing concern he had established. The firm, *Bureau des arts et d'industrie,* would specialize in J.S. Bach's works, at a time that they were not so well known. Sonnleithner was Beethoven's main publisher from 1802 until 1808.

their preferences were as to who should be their next captain. To surpass the previous system of inherited rulers, the very weakness of that system—the untapped potential of serfs, slaves, and subjects—had to be mobilized. Citizens had to be able to deliberate upon actual policies; and the success of such policy initiatives for revolutionary upshifts in production, hygiene, education, etc., was contingent upon that very same upwardly-mobile, future-engaged population.

Mozart had seized upon the radical notion that the leadership of the future was somehow born of the true love of a man and a woman, Tamino and Pamina; and that all mankind had been created with the capacity, not for giggly love, but for real love. Hence, each and every one was a potential genius, and qualified for citizenship. Beethoven's Leonore, otherwise an unlikely figure to make history, rises to the occasion, not because she is a good wife in love with her husband, but because she actually loves that which made her husband *qualified* to be a political prisoner.

Friedrich von Amerling, Emperor Franz II of Austria.

Adrienne Lafayette herself had been imprisoned by the French radicals in late 1792—shortly after her husband had been imprisoned by the anti-French, reactionary Coalition. She was still there in July 1794, when her sister, her mother, and her grandmother were taken from her one day and guillotined. She only escaped the same fate due to pressures exerted by America—from George Washington via his representatives in Paris, Gouverneur Morris and James Monroe. When finally released, a few months after the fall of Robespierre and the subsidence of the Terror, she proceeded to organize a personal confrontation with the Austrian Emperor, Francis II—demanding that he release her husband or that he imprison her in the same dungeon. Her willingness to go back into prison saved Lafayette.

EIRNS/Gabriela Ramírez-Carr

Donald Phau

The Elephant in the Room

So, six years before Beethoven selected "Leonore" for his first opera, there really was a woman who faced the guillotine; who watched as her sister, mother, and grandmother were taken away to have their heads chopped off; whose husband, the international symbol for freedom and progress, was imprisoned in a dungeon; and who, when given her freedom, volunteered to join her husband in his dungeon in an effort to free him. Further, it was no secret. There were plays and poems and newspaper articles published regarding her bold actions. Beethoven, a passionate republican, chose to compose what would be his only opera, based upon one of the plays celebrating just such developments—and no one is supposed to notice the connection between his opera and Adrienne's actual actions?

Perhaps even worse, forty-two years ago, a young, passionate republican, Donald Phau,[2] dared to break the silence and publish the simple and straightforward case, that Beethoven's opera was based upon the actions of Gilbert and Adrienne Lafayette—and his groundbreaking article was greeted with a deafening silence. Not even an "Oh, just a silly conspiracy theory in a LaRouche cultural journal."

This author has located, over the years, only two blips on the radar screen, faintly threatening to break the silence. One was a blogger, who had seen Phau's article, and had clearly wanted to write of the possible Beethoven/Lafayette connection—but rather tentatively, and only after first issuing a standard disclaimer

2. See "Fidelio: Beethoven's Celebration of the American Revolution," *Campaigner* magazine, Vol. II, No. 6, August 1978, pp. 42-46. The author, Donald Phau, would himself become a "political prisoner" a few years later.

against conspiracies. Next, the blogger proceeded to provide no traceable link to the "conspiracy-theorist" that had excited him. (In fact, the blogger simply twice provided the misspelled name "Pfau" without any mention of the actual article that he had read, nor any way for his readers to locate Phau's article.)

The other blip involved a private communication in 2008 from one scholar to another, about the planned publication in 2010 of an article on the Lafayette/Beethoven connection entitled, "Lafayette: The Musical Fabrication of a Political Myth."[3] Curiously, the article seems to have vanished into thin air, and inquiries to both of the authors as to the fate of that article have yielded silence.

And, to end this folly on a note both ironic and most ludicrous, consider: A musical company named "Opera Lafayette" has gone to some pains in researching and staging Beethoven's original *Leonore* opera—evidently, with nary a clue that it might be based upon the actual Lafayette! When the artistic director was asked directly about the "interesting parallel between the name of their company" producing the *Leonore* opera, and the actual Lafayette being imprisoned, he simply responded: "It is ironic ..."—end of story. This from a man who prides himself on, and has proven himself capable of, accurate historical reconstructions of the circumstances of opera of the period—even including the earlier Bouilly/Gaveaux version. What should we make of these curiosities? Could it really be that there is, indeed, no elephant in the room?

Perhaps a look through Beethoven's eyes would address this problem, while simultaneously getting us more into his thinking. For now, and simply put, enjoy living in

3. While the title intimated that the article would counter Phau's contention, the citation suggested it might have abutted it. Spalding's footnote reads: "In an article forthcoming in 2010, 'Lafayette: The Musical Fabrication of a Political Myth,' Laurent Ferri and Damien Mahiet cite Lafayette and Adrienne Lafayette as inspiration for Beethoven's opera *Lenore*. ... (notes to author from Ferri, 24 September, 27 October 2008)." It is note 29 on p. 358 of Spalding's *Lafayette: Prisoner of State*.

Bouilly's Story Undercuts Bouilly

Was Bouilly's play and opera simply another "rescue opera" featuring a non-descript prisoner who had been unjustly imprisoned? Here are four elements of Bouilly's libretto that strongly cohere with the actual story of Lafayette, but have no particular place in what is referred to by musicologists as the type of opera Bouilly put on—the generic "rescue operas" of the period. Otherwise, even the category of "rescue opera" applied to Beethoven's *Fidelio* is a 20th-century term and afterthought—that is, it was a way to lump Beethoven's *Fidelio* into a mass grave.

1. Bouilly's cover story would have us believe that one prisoner amongst many, whose wife he helped, inspired his play. However, his play actually describes a completely special cell for a very special prisoner. Below the regular cells are secret dungeons housing "state prisoners"—that is, already a special class of prisoners. But amongst those secret dungeons, there is one special cell to which no access is allowed—and that one is Florestan's, making him a very special, or unique, prisoner.

2. Bouilly represents the "more than two years" that he's been there as being an irregularly long sentence; hence, he has major enemies. (The jailer, Roc, asked if the prisoner is a "big criminal," answers, that "he must have big enemies; that amounts to the same thing.")

3. Pizare is depicted as being enraged, simply over the matter of the prisoners being allowed out for air. But this is the known incident, being allowed out for air, at the heart of the Lafayette escape attempt, which Bouilly and all Paris would have known. However, neither Bouilly nor the rest of Paris, probably had any way of knowing at the time that Count Pergen flew into a rage over the same incident.

4. Finally, and somewhat speculatively, there is the curiously "fortunate" way that Roc handles Pizare's rage. He says that the prisoners were allowed out on the occasion of the King's Name-Day (*Namensfest*). That is, Roc had the fortunate coincidence, whereby his allowing the prisoners out just happened to be on that day, and it covered for his merciful act. It is a gimmick that stands out as such in the libretto. However, the *Namensfest* of Emperor Franz II was October 4, 1797—not exactly Lafayette's liberation day, but only five days off (September 29, 1797). Bouilly's gimmick might have been quite acceptable to his audience, a few months after Lafayette's liberation.

the paradox: (a) there is no document where Beethoven writes that his opera is centered upon the case of Adrienne Lafayette, and (b) there is no way that his "Leonore" is not centered upon the case of Adrienne Lafayette.

Bouilly: Who Is This 'Lafayette' Fellow?

First, before addressing the body of our concerns, a moment for a little housekeeping is warranted. Let us dispense with the silly hurdle that academics erect against any connection between the Lafayettes and the opera. Jean-Nicolas Bouilly writes that the opera is simply based upon an anonymous woman whose husband was in a French jail and whom Bouilly himself had aided. Hence, it must be mere fortunate coincidence that his opera was arranged and performed in the four months after the Lafayettes were freed—when both the Lafayettes and the opera were the "talk of the town."

Yet, even were Bouilly's claim accurate, it would still be irrelevant. In the winter of 1797/8 in Paris, the events of the time, including the enthusiasm over Adrienne's role and of the victory of the long-desired freedom of the Lafayettes would overwhelm any other experience or interpretation of one attending Bouilly's *Leonore* production. More on this later. For now, it is farcical to imagine that Bouilly could have avoided the comparison.

Next, Bouilly's account is, in large part, his attempt to date the composition of his libretto several years prior to Lafayette's liberation. However, in attempting to do so, his account is internally inconsistent, as it runs up against not only known facts, but also his own statements. Bouilly claims that the play is based upon "a sublime deed of heroism and devotion by one of the ladies of the Touraine, whose noble efforts I had the happiness of assisting." Researcher David Galliver's important and careful work on Bouilly's claim, concludes: "No record of occurrences in the Touraine during the Revolution has been found to support his statement." Rather, his recollection is "an imaginative synthesis of Bouilly's own experiences and fantasies."

Finally, Bouilly's claim was made almost four decades after the fact, in the mid-1830s, shortly after Lafayette's death. It was in a reactionary period when one did not gain by praising Lafayette, and Bouilly certainly was one who could bend with the prevailing winds. One must take into account that Bouilly was a severely compromised figure. In 1792, Bouilly had been a constitutional monarchist, opposing threats to the life of the king, someone who might have appreciated Lafayette. By the summer of 1793, he was the host of a public bonfire to burn the paintings of all French kings. During the 1794 Terror, he was the President of the "Commission Militaire," the local body in the Tours region that tracked down and punished opponents of the Revolution. He ordered at least five victims to be put to death within a three-month period.

Thus, being one capable of going along to get along, Bouilly was certainly a candidate for riding on the Lafayette train in good times, and disclaiming any association in bad times. Indeed, were his attempted dating accurate, in his late-in-life *Mes Recapitulations,* he would have been writing his libretto at the same time, 1794, that he was executing prisoners. Rather than his portrayal of his aiding prisoners, he was then more like a real-life Pizarro. That his reconstruction has been received at face value by academics is symptomatic of the problem, as it speaks not so much to their scholarship as it does to their desire to sweep history off the stage.

INTRODUCTION

The Simple Story

Lafayette was the epitome of Friedrich Schiller's "a patriot of his country and a citizen of the world." He represented the "American" solution for Europe—defending both the humanity of the down-trodden against the powerful, and the principles and lawfulness of statecraft against the would-be revolutionaries. The former would seize and imprison him, while the latter would seize and imprison his wife—under suspicion of collaborating with her husband's enemies! The Coalition of Britain, Austria, and Prussia held Lafayette, outside of any rules that applied to prisoners of war, simply because he represented the American solution for Europe and was a threat to the established rule of Europe. Hence, they titled him a "prisoner of state," deserving of special treatment outside of the rules for prisoners of war.

Lafayette titled himself an American citizen, illegally detained while in neutral territory, while on his way to America. His imprisonment was directed to eliminate the fresh "America" option from a desperate Europe. As we shall see, the mobilization to free him involved the networks of Alexander Hamilton, Gottfried Lessing and Lazare Carnot. The Lafayettes, from prison, repeatedly identified Britain's William Pitt as the source for the actions of his underlings in Prussia and Austria.

Beethoven recognized the horrors of both the feu-

dalist oligarchs and the bloodthirsty Jacobins, and associated himself, between 1798 and 1804, with French constitutionalists who hoped to win over Bonaparte. Failing that, in 1804, Beethoven escalated the effort with *Leonore,* his only opera—using the remarkable case of Adrienne Lafayette to bring alive and catalyze the universal hopes and capacities of every man and woman. In the process, Beethoven revolutionized the stage, fashioning a cultural weapon unlike anything seen before or after. Nothing makes this case more than a listen to Beethoven's music, both the *Leonore* and the *Fidelio* versions. Otherwise, the historical record is not as simple, but it is a rewarding one—one that both should be known and is long overdue to be brought to light.

This report is organized in four movements.

I. The Story of the Lafayettes
II. The British Role—Whether 'Pizarro' Is William Pitt
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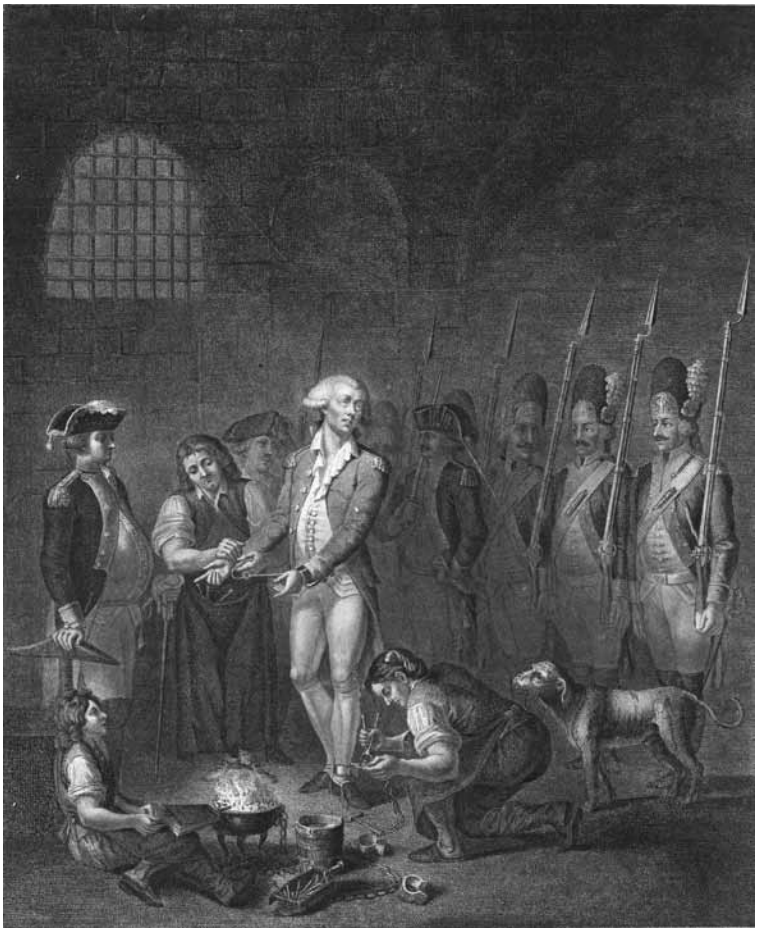
IV. *Fidelio*—Beethoven's Secular Mass for Humanity



The aftermath of Lafayette's failed escape attempt from Olmütz prison, November 8, 1794.

I. THE LAFAYETTES

Lafayette's Attempted Flight to America

In August 1792, the Jacobins moved aggressively, manipulating the rage of the French in their seizure of government, ending the tenuous constitutional monarchy of 1789-91. Lafayette, who was the Commander of the Army of Northern France against the threatened invasion by Prussia and Austria, made a quick trip back to Paris to warn the Assembly of the attempted coup. He succeeded, temporarily, in calling to task the Assembly and rallying a majority of them against the Jacobins' class-warfare. The Jacobins countered, attempting to indict Lafayette for dereliction of duty for even coming to Paris, but the Assembly voted by a large margin against this ruse.

He was back at his post, when, two days later, on August 10, the Jacobins recklessly plunged ahead. They launched a coup, seized King Louis XVI, and slaughtered the defenders of the Tuileries.[4] On August 17, their new "Provisional Executive Council" summoned Lafayette back to Paris to explain his anti-revolutionary actions. On August 19, Lafayette, and about forty others under him, quit France and headed for the American Embassy in The Hague. That same day, the Jacobins ordered Lafayette's arrest.

The next day, Lafayette's group was detained by Austrians near Rochefort, Belgium, in a supposedly

4. Gouverneur Morris reported to George Washington (January 10, 1793) of the event:

> I shall mention some Things which may serve as a Clue to lead thro Misteries—Those who plannd the Revolution which took Place on the tenth of August sought a Person to head the Attack, and they found a Mr [Francois-Joseph] Westermann whose Morals were far from Exemplary. He has no Pretensions to Science or to Depth of Thought, but he is fertile in Resources and endured with the most daring Intrepidity.

Of note, Westermann, allied with Danton, would become famous and win honors for his ruthless slaughter of French women and children. However, in due course, he was himself out-radicalized, prompting his own trip to the guillotine.

neutral area. At first, the captain of the guard there granted the normal rights of transit for the group. Then Lafayette's presence was noticed, and the normal rules and procedures went out the window. The group was detained and put under guard. Count Franz von Metternich, the chief minister of the Austrian Netherlands, asked Vienna for instructions, while Lord Auckland, the British envoy to The Hague, notified Lord Grenville, the Foreign Minister.

Queen Charlotte, wife of King George III.

Prime Minister William Pitt, the Younger.

On August 26, George III's wife, the British Queen Charlotte, in a letter to her son, gave the game away: "Wee see the very man who wanted to crush England, proves the curse to his own country, & I am sure he will meet with his reward."[5] She could be sure of this because their Prime Minister, William Pitt, made it a top priority over the next five years to so reward Lafayette. All the while, Pitt repeatedly claimed that the British Crown and government were uninvolved, having no interest in the unimportant Lafayette one way or the other.

Weeks later, Lafayette's first letter was sent to George Washington on October 8, 1792, reporting that he was taken "alone to the Citadel of Spandau between Berlin & Potsdam. … He was taken by the Troops of the Emperor although it is the King of Prussia who retains him a prisoner in his dominions." He asks that the U.S. send an envoy to make "the necessary engagements to emancipate him. ..." Lafayette would be moved around various Prussian prisons for almost two years, frustrating efforts to free him, before finally being handed over to the Austrians in May 1794, for their infamous dungeon in Olmütz.[6]

What Lafayette Fled

Meanwhile, that August, France's new Minister of Justice, Georges Danton, explained to the Jacobin Club that Lafayette was the "vile eunuch of the Revolution." Danton's mental state was such that he actually imagined he could discover proof, amongst the papers of Louis XVI, that Lafayette had betrayed France. However, as Gouverneur Morris, the U.S. representative in France, wrote to President Washington about Lafayette (10/23/92):

> His Enemies here are virulent as ever and I can give you no better Proof than this. Among the King's Papers [in August] was found Nothing of what his Enemies wishd and expected except his Correspondence with Monsieur de la Fayette which breathes from beginning to End the purest Sentiments of Freedom. It is therefore kept secret while he stands accus'd of Designs in Conjunction with the dethroned Monarch to enslave his Country.

While Danton might have experienced a bit of frustration at the lack of any evidence of Lafayette's guilt, his sense of justice found expression in the rounding up and mass slaughter of the French. Anyone who failed to

5. Paul S. Spalding's *Lafayette: Prisoner of State,* p. 45. The author is most indebted to Spalding's extensively researched work. Further, many quotations and translations of the "Fayettistes" cited here are to be found therein.

6. Lafayette's two fellow prisoners, also detained for the whole five years, were César de Latour-Maubourg (military leader and friend of Lafayette) and Jean Bureaux de Pusy (military engineer under Lafayette). Hamilton recommended Pusy to be the head of a future military academy. Later, César's brother married Lafayette's daughter, Anastasie, and Jean's son married Lafayette's grand-daughter, Mathilde.

swear loyalty to the Jacobin coup risked arrest and death. Danton's colleague, Jean-Paul Marat, was even more explicit in urging the "good citizens … to seize priests, and especially, the officers of the Swiss guards and their accomplices and run a sword through them."

On September 2, Danton escalated the violence, calling for direct action by the population against the foreign invaders: "We ask that anyone refusing to give personal service or to furnish arms shall be punished with death. … [We sound] the charge on the enemies of our country. To conquer them we must dare, dare again, always dare, and France is saved." For Danton, Lafayette was the central "enemy image" of France. The dare was to eliminate anyone thought to oppose the Jacobins. That day, and through the night, over a thousand prisoners were murdered; and so began the September Massacres. The next day, on September 3, Jean-Paul Marat sent out the call to the countryside that citizens should rush to come defend Paris—only that they should remember, before departing, to first execute their home-town counter-revolutionaries. This is what Lafayette had fled, two weeks earlier.

Georges Danton

Jean-Paul Marat

Washington's Knowledge of Europe's Decay

Morris briefed Washington:

> [The character] of France has ever been an enthusiastic Inconstancy. They soon get tird of a Thing. They adopt without Examination and reject without sufficient Cause. They are now agog of their Republic, and may perhaps adopt some Form of Government with a Huzza; but [it is unlikely to be a good government, or even adhered to]. The Factions here are violent and among those who administer the Government there is not I am told that Degree of Character which lays Hold of the Esteem and Respect of Mankind, but rather the contrary.
>
> And what of the enemies of France?
>
> [The Austrian Emperor] is now much influenced by Manfredi a Statesman of the Italian School who takes Insincerity for wisdom. ... [And] there is such a Mixture of Lust and Folly in the Chief [of Prussia] that no one Man can keep Things steady. …[7]

There were no heroes on either side. It was a profound and paramount concern of Washington's not to let the young American republic get enmeshed.

Morris's next report read:

> You will find that Events have blackened more and more in this Country. Her present Prospects are dreadful. [Worse than the enemy forces and the exhausted resources,] … the Disorganized State of the Government appears to be irremediable. … [I]n Short the Fabrick of the present System is erected on a quagmire. … The different Parties pass away like the Shadows in a Magic Lanthorn, & to be well with any one of

7. Morris's "Manfredi" is likely the Marchese Federico Manfredini. The Prussian King Frederick William II had at least twelve children out of wedlock, though the actual total is lost to history.

them would in a short Period become Cause of unquencheable Hatred with the others. Happy Happy America governd by Reason, by Law.… Your cool and steady Temper is now of infinite Consequence to our Country.

On March 25, 1793, Washington articulated to Morris his general approach:

> I can however with truth aver, that this Country is not guided by such narrow and mistaken policy as will lead it to wish the destruction of any Nation, under an idea that our importance will be increased in proportion as that of others is lessened. We should rejoice to see every Nation enjoying all the advantages that nature & its circumstances wd admit. … Upon this ground the prosperity of this Country wd unfold itself every day—and every day would it be growing in political importance.

Gilbert Stuart

George Washington in 1796.

To avoid taking sides, and yet still attempt to free Lafayette, Washington, along with Alexander Hamilton, arranged a series of private, non-governmental actions.

Alexander Hamilton's 'Free Lafayette' Operation

Hamilton served as the link between the official and unofficial operations to free Lafayette. Officially, Hamilton coordinated updates for, and deliberated with, Washington—which resulted in both the Marshall mission to Prussia's King Friedrich William II (see below), and a private letter to Emperor Francis II. However, even in these two cases, Washington was appealing as a private citizen and friend of Lafayette, not as the official action of the United States government. Washington and Hamilton worked from Philadelphia, along with Gouverneur Morris in Paris, Ambassador Charles Pinckney in London, Ambassador William Short at The Hague, and Consul John Parish in Hamburg.

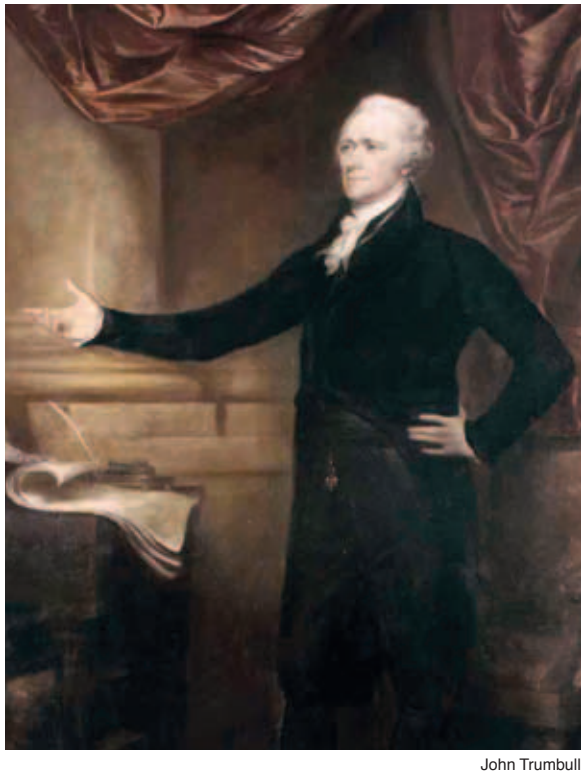
The bulk of the effort was unofficial. Hamilton worked on two different escape attempts—in Prussia in 1793, and at Olmütz in 1794—primarily through his in-laws, John and Angelica Church. (Angelica Schuyler Church was the sister of Hamilton's wife, Elisabeth Schuyler Hamilton.) John Church was in the House of Commons in London, working with Charles Fox's Whigs, the opposition party to William Pitt's government. Angelica channeled French republicans to Hamilton in the United States, where Hamilton debriefed and aided them. The first was Adrienne Lafayette's brother, Louis Marie, the Vicomte de Noailles, sent by Angelica to Hamilton on February 17, 1793. Others included, in Angelica's words to Hamilton:

- "[T]he Duke de Liancourt, he loved liberty with good sence and moderation, and he meant so well towards his country as to introduce into France a better system of Agriculture and to soften the situation of the Lower class of people there…besides many good qualities, this gentleman is the friend of the Marquis de Lafayette." This is the duc d'Rochefoucauld-Liancourt, Francois-Alexandre-Frederic. His son, Alexandre, was the French ambassador to Vienna in 1805, and very likely attended the premiere of Beethoven's *Leonore.* (Years later, another son, Sosthenes, would organize Beethoven concerts in Paris with a man who certainly had attended the 1805 premiere, the composer Luigi Cherubini.)
- "Dr. Priestly, a man dear to virtue and to science. … You my dear Brother will receive with

distinguished kindness this worthy stranger, (if he whose breast teems with the love of mankind may anywhere be called a stranger)."

Joseph Priestley was the well-known chemist and discoverer of oxygen.

Otherwise, Lafayette's own son, George, joined Hamilton's household during the 1795-97 period when both of his parents were in the Olmütz dungeon. Hamilton, Gouverneur Morris, and Washington coordinated monies both to assist Adrienne and for the rescue of Lafayette. John and Angelica ran a salon in London that included regular attendance by Pinckney and Morris. John was the prime funder of the rescue attempts made by the young Dr. Justus Erich Bollmann,[8] while Angelica received and transmitted Bollmann's reports on his ongoing efforts of 1793-96.



John Trumbull

Alexander Hamilton

Bollman had followed Lafayette's efforts in France during the Constitutional period of 1789-91, while he completed his medical degree at Göttingen University. Of note, Bollmann then spent time in Mainz with Reinhold Förster,[9] who had just written the introduction to a 1790 biography of Lafayette (*Lafayette, als Staatsmann*, the German edition of Berenger's French biography of Lafayette). The work is replete with Lafayette's dealings with Washington and Hamilton. Bollmann wrote to his father: "My best company is in Förster's home. I spend every evening in this family, where several clever and interesting people have free access."

Förster also had connections with Hamburg's Elise Reimarus, dating back to the period of Gottfried Lessing's work with the Reimarus family. Two years later, in 1793, Bollmann would be deployed by the Churches to work with Elise's Hamburg group in the first rescue efforts; but it is likely that he was already acquainted with them from his time with Förster.

Lafayette's Lifeline: The Hamburg Republicans

The coordination of the largely underground communications with Lafayette, and the publicizing of his case, centered upon a group of republicans in Hamburg—otherwise known to history from the Lessing/Reimarus controversy. (Gottfried Lessing's publication in the mid-1770s of the philosophical and religious writings of Dr. Hermann Reimarus was the occasion of various attacks upon Lessing.)

In his last few years, Lessing worked closely with Reimarus' son and daughter, Johann Albert and Elise—

8. Curiously, Bollmann was a rare American at the 1814 Congress of Vienna when Beethoven intervened with his re-worked *Fidelio*. The U.S. ambassador to France, William Crawford, wrote of Bollmann: "This philosophic and science-loving man … is going to Austria … to establish steam-boats on the Danube." While there, he worked with Count Philipp Stadion, the Minister of Finance, attempting to form a National Bank in Austria. Until 1796, he had worked to free Lafayette. He then moved to America. The ugly side of his career, from 1803-07, included a demoralizing bankruptcy, a consequent association with Aaron Burr, and, most eerily, the role of Burr's second in the 1804 duel in which Burr murdered Hamilton.

9. Förster, the Halle Professor of Natural History and Mineralogy, had been the naturalist on James Cook's 1772-75 circumnavigation of the globe. He took his 17-year-old son, Georg, with him. Georg's 1793 book (on his 1790 travels with Alexander von Humboldt) included an account of his 1777 meeting with Benjamin Franklin, the man "who stole lightening from the heavens and the scepter from the tyrant." Praising the U.S. Constitution, he summarized Franklin's message for turbulent Europe:

> You, children of Europe! Honor the divine spark of Reason within you, and perfect it through its use. Freedom can be achieved by virtue alone. Virtue is possible only through reason. Anger and hatred will produce only blood; and with blood alone no man will ever purchase his freedom.

In early 1793, Georg became the vice-president of the short-lived Mainz Republic. Emperor Franz II declared him an outlaw with a prize of 100 ducats upon his head.

and, later, the two would be at the center of what became the Hamburg "Fayettistes." Their brother-in-law, August von Hennings, a Danish official (and close collaborator of Lessing's dear friend, Moses Mendelssohn), published on Lafayette. And then there was Johanna Reimarus, the daughter of Johann and Sophie (née Hennings) Reimarus. She married Georg Sieveking, a leading republican and activist in Hamburg, uniting these networks.

The Reimarus/Hennings/Sieveking grouping maintained contact with republicans throughout Europe. Wherever Lafayette was transferred to, during his twenty or so months in Prussian prisons, and during his forty or so months at Olmütz, this grouping managed to maintain an underground communication system with him. What they smuggled out was published, from 1792 to 1797, in French, English and German, for Beethoven and other republicans to follow. One key, early "Fayettist" smuggler was Christoph Girtanner, an associate of Förster and another graduate of Göttingen University.[10] He arranged cooperation from one or more military officers at the Magdeburg prison. Evidently, there were more than a few guards and prison employees who respected and were willing to help Lafayette. This group coordinated with the American consul in Hamburg, John Parish.

Friedrich Georg Weitsch

Johann Wilhelm von Archenholz in 1789.

The Hamburg group was also affiliated with the famous author, Friedrich Klopstock, who reported on an early visit to Lafayette. Adrienne wrote Klopstock a letter of appreciation for his visit and his article. Either of the German-language articles on Lafayette's imprisonment, from *Minerva* or from Klopstock, might have been Beethoven's first news of the matter. While Beethoven is known to have read much of Klopstock, there is no known record as to what actually was his first source.

A large portion of the publicity was done by Baron Johann Wilhelm von Archenholz. The February 1793 issue of his *Minerva* magazine featured his major article on Lafayette's situation. It was smuggled into Lafayette's cell in Magdeburg, providing much-needed moral support. (Archenholz's magazine was a major source of political events for German-speakers, probably including for Beethoven.) Lafayette's response to Archenholz, smuggled out by an unidentified American with the help of a prison guard, was the first the larger world heard from him, published after more than six months of imposed silence:

> Having been informed of an American consul being in Hamborough, I will, upon the claim of a fellow citizen, and with the confidence of a friend entreat your assistance—You know, Sir, the preparations, beginning, and progress of the French Revolution down to the time when I thought it inconsistent with the rights of the people at large, the sentiments of the majority of their representatives, and the true notions of liberty, to unite with partial acts of violence, and was of course obliged momentarily to seek for a neutral ground—You also have heard of my falling in with an Austrian detachement, whereby I was made a prey to the governing powers on this side of the Rhine—By what principles, professions, and acts, I have from my early youth to this period deserved their animadversion it is my boast to remember, theirs to resent—Let it suffice to say that I have … been dragged through horrid confinements, to a most unpleasant, narrow hole, digged under the remparts of this citadel … where I am shut up from all company, all kind of news, and every means to hear from, or write to my friends. Under these circumstances, I have had the un-

10. Girtanner studied chemistry, physics and medicine at Göttingen in 1780-82 and was closely associated there with Georg Lichtenberg, Benjamin Franklin's collaborator. (His research included work on the electrical decomposition of various substances, including in relation to color.) Girtanner's *Historical News and Political Considerations About the French Revolution* covered 1789-92 in seven volumes, advocating a constitutional monarchy with a bicameral legislature. It included a biography of Lafayette, along with many sharp observations, especially on the manipulations by the duc d'Orleans prior to the assault on the Bastille.

hoped for good fortune, to steal a letter out of my den to be forwarded to you. ...

Lafayette received Archenholz's *Minerva* every month, and Archenholz reported back to Pinckney. Amongst other matters, Pinckney's pressure on the Prussians finally succeeded in getting Lafayette out of his cell for a one-hour walk. Lafayette wrote: "Finally, after more than five months, I felt the contact of outside air, not without a shiver. I saw the sun again, and felt quite well"—a treasured experience. To recreate such a moment, one could not do much better than to hear again the "Prisoner's Chorus" in Beethoven's opera.

Dr. Justus Erich Bollmann

Communications throughout 1793 involved planning for an escape from the Magdeburg prison. Pinckney secured Lafayette's funds, 6,000 livres, for the rescue effort. Archenholz smuggled in maps covering the pertinent territory from Magdeburg to Hamburg, along with details on Prussian military protocols and the like. However, before the escape attempt, Lafayette was transferred yet again. This time he was sent to a prison in Neisse, closer to the Austrian border.

The Prussian king had decided to hand Lafayette over to the Austrian, as he was pulling out of the war on France. (Friedrich Wilhelm II, far from a pacifist, was merely redeploying his forces eastward, so as to defeat the Polish republic of Kosciusko and grab land there.)

Bollmann, aside from the escape plans, was also involved with the pressure exerted upon the Prussian court to free Lafayette. In early September 1793, he met with the King's uncle, Prince Henry, who advised Bollmann to avoid the King's chief minister, Girolamo Lucchesini, and go to the foreign affairs minister, Count Heinrich von Haugwitz. Yet, Lucchesini still managed to intervene, blocking the American documents (on the illegality of Lafayette's detention) from being passed to Haugwitz or to be considered. Bollmann retreated to Hamburg, socializing with the Reimarus grouping there during Christmas.[11]

At this point, Hamilton arranged for a new mission to the Prussian king, to be carried out by James Markham Marshall, the brother of the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, John Marshall. Hamilton discussed the type of letter to be sent with Marshall at a Cabinet meeting on January 14, 1794. He sent Marshall (as reported in his December 27, 1793 letter to Angelica) to visit the Churches on his way to Berlin, with Washington's personal letter of January 15. This mission, first directed toward the king's uncle, Prince Henry, superseded the efforts of the more aristocratic "Henin/Lally" grouping.[12] (The latter were then directed to refund the balance of their monies for redeployment through the more republican networks of the Churches.)

The mission, however, was still-born, as King Friedrich Wilhelm II was already in negotiations with Austria to take over Lafayette's incarceration. Prussia's Foreign Minister, Count Finkenstein, would confide later to Britain's Lord Grenville that some mysterious American (Marshall) had appeared in Berlin with two letters from Washington, one to Prince Henry and one to the king, but the British could be assured that the king had refused to see Marshall or to even accept the letter.

Olmütz: 'As If He No Longer Existed'

On May 17, 1794, Lafayette was handed over to the Austrians, taken to the Olmütz prison, and placed in isolation. He was allowed neither contact nor exercise—nor even his own name. Rather, he was assigned the number "2" and placed in a cell where uncovered latrine gutters lay below his window. The architect of Lafayette's new imprisonment was one Franz Anton,

11. Evidently, Archenholz criticized Bollmann for bragging about the rescue operation, as he tried to impress the ladies. Years later, he would call him "a wind bag and scatterbrain." At some point, likely during his 1803-07 breakdown, Bollmann would recall Archenholz as "a rough, physically and morally ugly would-be politician, and besides that, also a true Jew and absolutely nothing at all besides!"

12. The couple, Princess Adelaide d'Henin and Count Trophime de Lally-Talendal, were at the center of French royal émigrés in London, willing to have a constitutional monarchy. Henin was a lady-in-waiting for Marie Antoinette. Her estranged husband was guillotined. Lally was imprisoned in August 1792 by the Jacobins, but was released hours before the September 2, 1792 massacres of the inmates.

Count d'Arco, the commander of the Olmütz Fortress. Two weeks earlier, he had defined the mission: "[T]o treat such a dangerous person as if he had been transferred completely out of the world while retaining only his life, as if he no longer existed and has been forgotten."

The Olmütz Fortress hosted Arco's Galician Infantry Regiment #56, the "Wenzel Colloredo" Regiment. Count Arco, it turns out, was the brother of Karl, a different Count d'Arco, whose claim to fame is that he fired Wolfgang Mozart by unceremoniously throwing him "out the door with a kick in the arse."[13]

Karl had performed that service for his boss, Hieronymus, the Prince-Archbishop of Salzburg, who had called Mozart "a rogue, a slovenly, immoral lout!"[14] This Count d'Arco, Lafayette's torturer, performed his duties for Wenzel Colloredo, the brother of Hieronymus—indeed a small world. The two Colloredo brothers undoubtedly thought that they obtained quality service from the two underling Arco brothers in dealing with Mozart and Lafayette.

Before dismissing such a curious situation as a mere coincidence, it might better be considered as an excellent example of the modus operandi, or the imbedded sadistic practices, of a feudal oligarchy when threatened.

The Escape Attempt

Bollmann spent some time and effort discovering Lafayette's new location. Then, in Vienna, he recruited a young American, Francis Huger, for the attempt to free the prisoner. (Huger's father, Benjamin, had been Lafayette's initial host upon his arrival in America in 1777.)

Sometime during the summer, when Arco was away, the prisoners were allowed an hour of exercise out of their cells. Lafayette was allowed, under guard, to ride inside a carriage. When Arco returned in October, he noted the new carriage rides, but did no more than add extra security. On November 8, 1794, Bollmann and Huger attempted to overcome the security. Huger was detained. Bollmann's struggle with a guard resulted in Lafayette escaping on the horse provided him, but without Bollmann's help to guide him across the border. Lafayette, without a guide or a map, ended up on the wrong road. He was re-arrested by local authorities that night, and returned before dawn to Olmütz.

Three days later, Count Anton Pergen,[15] the Minister of Police (and the originator and head of the Secret Police), submitted his initial report to Emperor Franz II: "It goes without saying how irregularly things were carried out on Lafayette's drive. … How could it be possible for these foreigners to carry out such a bold operation, for which they had to make trips and rehearsals?" There had to be dangerous forces beyond the two young men, Bollmann and Huger.

Pergen, assumedly with the help of British financial authorities, would track 675 florins sent by John Church in London to Bollmann. Church, Pergen was informed, had sent the money by way of the Ochs & Geymüller exchange house. Franz II agreed to assign the army to work with Pergen, so as to root out the full conspiracy. Otherwise, Pergen was incensed: "Since this incident confirms once again that these state prisoners only think of cunning and deceit, to abuse the good manner in which they are being treated, it is quite right to suspend all the driving that until now has been allowed them for their health." Within weeks, the prison surgeon found Lafayette to be "emaciated, feverish, congested and prematurely aged … near death."[16]

Bollmann escaped detection for a week, then was captured, chained to a twenty-pound ball, and put into isolation—save for a healthy contingent of bedbugs. Arco informed Lafayette: "The rogues, who were so bold as to carry you off, are arrested. They shall be hanged. It shall be under your window; and, if there is no executioner, I will do that myself." (Recall, in Beethoven's opera, that Pizarro, the fortress commander, without an underling who will murder the "state prisoner" for him, decides that he'll do it himself.)

Within days, the Fayettistes knew of the attempt and

13. June 9, 1791 letter from Mozart to his father, Leopold.

14. May 9, 1791 letter to Leopold. Mozart responded to Colloredo, "[S]o is Your Highness not satisfied with me?" to which Colloredo answered: "What, are you threatening me?"

15. Colloredo, Arco, and Pergen had been the core of the "Get Mozart" grouping. Five years earlier, Pergen had attempted to entrap Mozart and his particular Masonic lodge grouping, using a police agent to provoke sympathetic actions for the Jacobins in Paris—a ruse rejected by the lodge. However, the circumstances of Mozart's premature demise in 1791 were fully within Pergen's means and motivation. One is hard-pressed to find a Lafayette-torturer who didn't train on the Mozart case. See David Shavin's article "Mozart and the American Revolutionary Upsurge," reprinted from *Fidelio* magazine, Vol. I, No. 4, Winter 1992.

16. Quote is Spalding's summary of surgeon Andreas Axter's report, from his *Lafayette: Prisoner of State*, p. 118.

the failure. Angelica Church reported to the London group; John Quincy Adams reported from The Hague back to the United States; and Sophie Reimarus wrote her brother, August Hennings: "Bollmann, a worthy, noble young man, openly wanted to transform his self-interest into a noble act, and rescue Lafayette." He acted on "commissions from America, and with as much money as he needed …," but the attempt failed. Bollmann's full report to Angelica, on August 1, 1795, was published by the Churches as "An Account of the Attempt."

J.A. Ecker

Johann de Paula, Baron of Thugut

Francis II and Pergen set up two separate investigations, so as to whipsaw the three prisoners in between them. Pergen's military panel was a "Lafayette investigative commission" and the Emperor's "civil" investigation was "the Dr. Bollmann investigative commission." Franz II ordered the latter to be "proceeding *with great precision* to discover the intrigues that must have been at work in this affair." Young Huger was shown the prison's torture instruments and Arco threatened him with death.

Lafayette tried to take all the blame, downplaying the role of Bollmann and Huger; but he maintained his long-held position, that "… no power is authorized to hold him captive, because he is a citizen of the United States of America and not a prisoner of war." Pergen's commission gave Lafayette the bureaucratic response, that unfortunately they "had no authorization to accept his protests here."

Bollmann and Huger spent eight months in the Olmütz prison before the Austrians yielded to pressure and released them. They both reported back to the Churches on their way to the United States. Angelica sent them to Hamilton, who introduced them to Washington, Adams, and others. Bollmann reflected the Lafayettes' appraisal, telling Washington: "The inducement which leads to this conduct of the British ministry seems to be personal hatred. …"[17] Washington followed Hamilton's advice and directed a personal letter to Franz II, though it is not clear whether the Emperor ever received it.

Adrienne, aka Leonore

Lafayette had been in his Olmütz cell for two months, when Adrienne's sister, mother, and grandmother were guillotined on July 22, 1794. Only an intensive intervention by Gouverneur Morris upon the French government saved her from joining the rest of her family under the blade that day. Adrienne would be imprisoned in Paris from November 1792 until February 1795. She was also visited and supported by Morris' successor in Paris, James Monroe. Again, pause to consider—both "sides" in the war are imprisoning both husband and wife, as simultaneously enemies of both "sides"—not a lot of breathing room in the middle.

Monroe, along with the U.S. Consuls in Dunkirk and Hamburg, Francis Coffyn and John Parish, arranged for monies and passports for Adrienne's next mission—to the Olmütz prison. She travelled as "Mrs. Motier" of Hartford, Connecticut, as Gilbert Motier (Lafayette) had been made a citizen there. On the way, she met with Archenholz, who thought her plan for Olmütz too risky. She assured him: "In this my decision is firm, and nothing in the world can bring me from it." The Emperor would release Lafayette or imprison her. Archenholz took her to visit Friedrich Klopstock, but he declined their request to compose an ode on Lafayette's imprisonment, only agreeing to write privately to important contacts. It is not clear if he followed up on his pledge.

Upon arriving in Vienna, Adrienne first went to see the Countess Caroline von Rumbeck, otherwise known to history as Mozart's first student in Vienna. She and her cousin, Count Johann Philipp Cobenzl, were the very individuals who had recruited Mozart to Vienna in 1781, freeing him that Spring from Prince Colloredo and Count Arco. Cobenzl, then the Vice-Chancellor for Emperor Joseph II, had welcomed Mozart to his estate, opened doors for the talented youth, and created the possibility of a livelihood for Mozart without feudal servitude. Now, fourteen years later, Countess Caroline advised Adrienne that they had to manage a meeting

17. Letter to George Washington from Justus Erick Bollman, April 10, 1796. National Archives, Founders Online.

with Franz II, yet avoiding Baron Thugut. She arranged for Adrienne to get to Francis II via the grand chamberlain, Prince Franz Orsini-Rosenberg.[18] Hence, the famous October 12, 1795 exchange with Franz II was accomplished, and, importantly, without Thugut's presence.

Jean-Honoré Fragonard (F. Bolt), 1796

Adrienne reunited with Lafayette.

'My Hands Are Tied'

Francis II explained to Adrienne that, on Lafayette's incarceration, "his hands were tied" as "it was a complicated matter." But he agreed to arrangements that Thugut would not have allowed, arrangements perhaps later regretted by the Emperor. Adrienne reported that joint imprisonment "was all that he could do, but that he would grant me this permission with great pleasure. …" More on this meeting is covered in Section II of this report, but, for now, Thugut was instructed, afterwards, to make the arrangements; and when they met, he made icy-hearted comments about the executions of her family. Adrienne found Thugut to be "the coldest and most impenetrable of men."

The next day, the British minister in Vienna, Morton Eden, alerted Lord Grenville that Adrienne had succeeded in her plan. That evening, she was incarcerated in Olmütz prison. It was Lafayette's 38th month in prison, and 17th month in isolation at Olmütz.

Adrienne reported to Pinckney:

> … [W]e found him in the most absolute solitude, not knowing our frightful misfortunes; that it had been expressly prohibited to tell him if we existed, his children and I, that his wasting away is frightful, his chest a source of horrible suffering.

Yet, despite his physical condition, she was able to write one of Lafayette's former military aides, Captain André Pierre Masson:

> He is morally as you left him. You know the force and sweetness of his soul, and despite the moral and physical tortures that [his captors] have chosen to heap upon him, there is not the least alteration in his character, nor the least imbalance in his temper.

The prison doctor, Axter, wrote that Lafayette, though still suffering from fevers, asthma and emaciation, began climbing out of mortal danger. Thugut spent months attempting to pressure Adrienne to leave the prison, by making the conditions harsh. Minor requests, such as permission to attend Sunday Mass, were rejected with language such as: "… as you have consented to share your husband's lot, it will not be possible for you to obtain any change in your situation."

When she needed medical help beyond the capabilities of the prison, first her condition was allowed to fester for two more months. Then the ultimatum was conveyed to her in person, as it was not allowed to be committed to paper: She would be allowed to go to Vienna for treatment only on the condition that she could not rejoin her husband. She refused, writing afterwards: "They will not tear me away from here except with M. Lafayette, unless, perhaps, they drag me away dead."

18. Orsini-Rosenberg was no "Fayettiste," but Caroline managed to arrange the meeting as a personal favor. Adrienne's uncle, the Marquis Emmanuel de Noailles, had been the French ambassador to Vienna in the 1780s and was well-known to Orsini-Rosenberg.

Pergen's Damage Control Effort

Adrienne's report of her confrontation with Emperor Franz II was reported in some detail to Bollmann, who made a full report to the London "Fayettistes." It became the heart of the next intervention upon Pitt in the British Parliament, led by General Fitzpatrick. He focused upon Franz's admission that "His hands were tied" to point to Pitt as the manipulator. (More of this intervention also is in the next Section.) General Fitzpatrick's speech in Parliament was publicized in several languages, embarrassing Franz II.[19] The Minister of Police, Count Johann Anton von Pergen, took charge, arranging to publish a cover story.[20] First, on January 2, 1797, he assigned his underling Ugarte to obtain "precise and trustworthy information" on the conditions at Olmütz, but "in the strictest confidentiality." The latrine/sewage arrangement outside the window of the Lafayettes was finally moved; and for the next two months, Vienna circulated their version of the humane treatment of the Lafayettes in such publications as Vienna's *Magazin der Kunst und Literatur,* Leipzig's *Eudaemonia,* and Jena's *Allgemeine Literatur-Zeitung.* On March 8, 1797, the campaign culminated with "A Reliable Report of the Treatment of Lafayette and His Family in the Prison at Olmütz," whereby the reader was assured of clean, dry rooms, properly ventilated and heated, with sufficient light. This propaganda effort backfired.

Tompkins Harrison Matteson, 1850

Lafayette with his wife and two daughters in Olmütz prison.

In response, Lafayette's former aide, Philippe Charles d'Agrain,[21] was provoked to publish his *Captivité de La Fayette* with authentic details and accurate notes on the conditions. It began with an image of prison chains and the motto "Suffer and Die," and included a poem, "The Castle of Olmütz." A portion reads, in translation:

> In these somber dungeons, image of hell,
> Bent down now for five years under the weight of my chains,
> Dead to all humanity, entirely so to the natural world,
> In this abyss where light barely descends,
> Must I, in my wrenching pains without relief,
> Die by intervals in the sight of my oppressors?

Then, while contemplating what he had sacrificed, Adrienne appears. This poetic image of the angel Leonore would find its way onto the stage in Paris, in Florestan's soliloquy—and more powerfully, in Beethoven's opera. [e.g., "*Ein engel, Leonoren*" (enters at 5:43)]

19. Evidently one "Fayettiste" who published in German was the composer J.F. Reichardt, in his *Frankreich* magazine. In 1794, his sympathies for Lafayette ended his employment with Friedrich Wilhelm II's court. Later, in 1808 and afterwards, he would have discussions with Beethoven in Vienna on the topic of the Bonapartes, and possibly also on the Lafayette case.

20. In 1790/91, Pergen had been the author of the infamous cover story on the American Revolution. In brief, he found that all Masonic and irregular formations can be useful instruments for imperial controllers, but anything connected with the American Revolution had to be stamped out. He particularly targeted the networks of Moses Mendelssohn and Gottfried Lessing. His intelligence operation would spawn the 1797 *Proofs of a Conspiracy: Against All the Religions and Governments of Europe, Carried on in the Secret Meetings of Freemasons, Illuminati, and Reading Societies* by Edinburgh's John Robison; the 1798 U.S. Alien and Sedition Act; and generations of hyperventilating "Weishaupt/Illuminati" conspiracy theories. However, the only salient point about Weishaupt's little Bavarian lodge was that it was founded in 1776, and, hence, to be understood as an "American" virus.

21. Adjutant General Agrain had been part of Lafayette's original contingent detained in 1792. Full title: *Captivité de La Fayette, héroïde, avec figures et des notes historiques non encore connues du public sur les illustres prisonniers d'Olmütz en Moravie.*

The Lafayette Spring of 1797

Spring, 1797, was the beginning of the end of the captivity of the Lafayettes. In early April elections in France, more moderate factions were elected. Now two of the five Directors—Lazare Carnot and François Barthelemey—were overtly for demanding Lafayette's release, and pressure was mounting upon the other three. Napoleon's army smashed Austria in northern Italy and pressed upon Vienna itself, forcing peace negotiations. Public discussion of the Lafayettes became much more agitated, including the first play on the Olmütz prisoners, P.A. Prefontaine's *Le Prisonnier d'Olmütz ou le devouement conjugal,*[22] dedicated to Adrienne Lafayette. It was a "profound sensation" when it opened on May 20, 1797 in Paris, catalyzing the public discussions.

Jean-Marc Nattier

Pierre-Augustin Caron de Beaumarchais

A song of Lafayette was now circulated in Paris. Friedrich August Baumbach's *Le songe de La Fayette* was a musical setting of a powerful 1794 mini-drama, *Lafayette's Dream* by Baron Friedrich von Oertel.[23] There, Lafayette, in his dungeon, is "emasculated by the poison of loneliness" and tortured by visions of the guillotines and angry mobs. Then, the guardian spirit of America visits him, revealing to him a celebration of Lafayette in Boston and a warm reunion with Washington. The success in America even spills over into solving France's turmoil. Lafayette's dream clarifies his sense of mission and newly invigorates him. This 1794 scene of the guardian angel—here, "America"—would also find its way into Bouilly's play in Florestan's inspiration from above. By the time Baumbach set Oertel's drama to music in 1797, the dream's "guardian spirit" had taken the person of Adrienne Lafayette.

Prefontaine's *Prisoners of Olmütz* and Baumbach's *The Song of Lafayette* were certainly timely that Spring. Along with those, there appeared in May 1797, a delightful play by Beaumarchais, calling for an end to the factional warfare in France, in a fashion perhaps only possible by Beaumarchais. This was his *La Mere Coupable* which he labeled a "Moral Drama."

Of note, the previous year, Beaumarchais' daughter, Eugenie, married Lafayette's former aide, André-Toussaint Delarue—who was also the brother-in-law of Lafayette's close ally, Mathieu Dumas. Shortly after Lafayette was freed, he would appeal to Alexander Hamilton on behalf of both the Dumas and Beaumarchais families for the funds owed to Beaumarchais, as both families had lost most of their wealth in their efforts for America:

> His brother Delarue, my aide-de-camp in the National Guards, one of the cleverest & best young men I ever knew, has married Beaumarchais's daughter…. I am bound by friendship to interest myself in the welfare of Dumas & his brother, the more so as the faithful good Will of both, & the exertions of the former in my behalf during my captivity, entitle them to my gratitude. My most affectionate respects wait upon Mrs. Hamilton & Mrs. Church.[24]

22. In the play, Napoleon is the rescuer. It is cited in Charavy's 19th century *General La Fayette*, p. 366: "La deliverance des prisonniers d'Olmutz causa en Europe une sensation profonde; leur captivite avait fourni le subject d'une piece de theatre, 'le Prisonnier d'Olmutz,' jouee a Paris, le 1st prairial an V (20 mai 1797), et dediee par son auteur, Prefontaine, a Mme de La Fayette. On y louait l'intervention de Bonaparte."

23. Oertel was the translator for the first U.S. novel ever published in German, Brockden Brown's *Ormond: Or the Secret Witness*, a fascinating novel on French and American intrigues of the period. Baumbach had directed the opera and music theatre in Hamburg, and then moved to Leipzig in 1789. In 1792, he set to music "Die Forelle"—the poem by Christian Schubart, also imprisoned for supporting the American Revolution. (Franz Schubert's famous setting of "Die Forelle" was done a generation later.)

24. Hamilton had supported Beaumarchais' claim when he was Secretary of the Treasury. Dumas also wrote to Hamilton that same day, December 8, 1797:

> … The storms of the French Revolution, our efforts to Conquer and secure our freedom, our very misfortunes have often brought

Recall also that Lafayette and Beaumarchais were the two leading Frenchmen who had staked their futures upon covert operations in support of the American Revolution, importantly in the period before May 1778, before France's official alliance with America.

In his typically light vein, Beaumarchais' new play had the Count and Countess Almaviva (from the two earlier parts of his trilogy, *The Barber of Seville*, and *The Marriage of Figaro*) now reappear twenty years later, she with an illegitimate son, Leon, and he with a ward, Florestine—who is, in fact, his illegitimate daughter. (And, yes, months later, Bouilly may even have borrowed the name of "Florestan" from Beaumarchais' female character, "Florestine.")

Lazare Carnot, member of the French Directorate.

Both Count and Countess have been lying to each other for decades. An unscrupulous fellow, Begearss, exposes Florestine's bastard status, so as to destroy the marriage of Leon and Florestine; hence, he can wed Florestine himself and get the Count's fortune. Figaro and Susanne expose him and arrange for the love-birds to marry. How? By exposing that Leon is also illegitimate! (Since there is no consanguinity—that is, they are not siblings—marriage is possible!) The subtitle, "Drame Moral," is delightfully fulfilled: The lies and shortcomings of both sides will be manipulated by evil third parties, to the destruction of all—unless one can forgive the faults of the other, and laugh at one's own faults. A very healthy play for a much-abused France.

Beaumarchais had actually written the play in 1791, but its successful six-week run on the Paris stage in the summer of 1792 was cut short that August by the Jacobin coup against the Constitution. Just when Lafayette had to flee, Beaumarchais also had to go into hiding.[25] Now, in the Spring of 1797—and perhaps only in Paris—awful divisions in France could be staged as a comedy, in terms of the sexual peccadillos of the aristocracy and the traps they weave for themselves.[26]

Freedom

All three cultural interventions represented new hope in Paris that Spring and would provide some buoyancy to Carnot's initiatives. The Austrians stalled—choosing to interpret their initial, April 18th treaty with Bonaparte, whereby "prisoners of war will be turned over…," so as not to apply to their special "prisoners of state." Thugut told Colloredo, now the Privy Cabinet Minister, that the release of the Lafayettes would be delayed until the final end of negotiations; and those assurances were given to Eden, the British envoy.

On April 24, the Directory sent instructions to Napoleon with their compromise version: Lafayette was to be freed, but only to go to America, not directly to France. Eleven days later, Carnot intervened again, writing to Napoleon's staff General Clarke:

> Obtain provisionally, if possible, the liberty of Lafayette, Bureau-Pusy, and Latour-Marbourg.

me back to those happy times where we were helping to complete the American Revolution. … I could not begin this Correspondence under a more favorable auspice than that of my meeting with our mutual friend Le Gal. Lafayette whom I came to join here after his resurrection from the tomb of Olmütz. ... I will add that in the present state of affairs if this payment was carried out; whatever the values and terms may be, we would not dream of displacing our fortune, but rather of going to enjoy it as good and old adopted Americans, on the native land of freedom, where I would be very happy to See you again.

25. Beaumarchais would end up fleeing Paris in October 1794, choosing to live in Hamburg for two years—evidently the haven for the "Fayettistes." There, in March 1795, Beaumarchais made his first appeal to Hamilton for assistance in resolving the monies owed to him by the U.S. government. (That letter is not yet publicly available, but it may indicate that his introduction to Hamilton was arranged by the Hamburg "Fayettistes.") The Directory allowed him back to Paris in July 1796, in time for his daughter's marriage into Dumas' family.

26. Beaumarchais' *Figaro* play had a similar history, with the French court of 1775-78, when it was still "toying" with the American Revolution; and as Mozart's opera, with the Austrian court of 1785/6, when Joseph II had problems getting the aristocracy to join with his "America"-inspired reforms. See the three sections on *Figaro* in the author's article from December 2010, "Mozart's *Entschlossenheit,* or 'Don Giovanni' vs. Venetian Ca-Ca."

It is a matter of national honor that they leave behind the dungeons where they are kept because they began the Revolution.

Napoleon passed along the demand to the Austrians, though it is not clear what priority he assigned to their release. A joint letter to Napoleon, from Andre Masson, Joseph Masclet and Victor Maubourg,[27] warned that the British envoy George Hammond had arrived in Vienna with secret instructions on the prisoners, along with more gold.

James Gill Photography

Beethoven's "Prisoner's Chorus," celebrating the light and fresh air.

Negotiations dragged on, and by early July, the Austrians told Napoleon that they were fine with getting rid of their prisoners, but that they'd received a formal request from Russia's Tsarina Catherine II, to keep them. Bonaparte agreed with the Fayettistes that Pitt had arranged for this ruse of Catherine muddying the waters. Carnot, yet again, on August 1, pressed Napoleon , reflecting the public pressure:

> [T]he new requests that people are making to the Directory about the prisoners of Olmütz…. Citizen General, the Directory reminds you of the desire it has expressed to you to see that their captivity ends as soon as possible. It doubts not that you share the concern their misfortune inspires.

With decreasing room to manipulate, in late July, Vienna begins preparations to disengage with the prisoners. Thugut sends a representative, General Chastelet, to Olmütz to secure signed statements from the prisoners that they had been treated well. Lafayette throws cold water upon their fantasies, explaining that the publicity of their bad conditions had understated the reality. He emphasized particularly the lack of fresh air, the "disgusting" sewage, and the denial of any news of his family "while they were under the knives of the Jacobins…."

Chastelet reported back to Vienna that the prisoners had "an immense detail of small inconveniences" which were "too long to report…"—and that Lafayette rebuffed any condition from Francis II that dictated where he could live, insisting that he had been seized "on neutral territory in violation of international law…." Chastelet explained to Lafayette that a "state prisoner" had no such rights against such seizure—which began to delineate what this special term, "state prisoner," meant and how it was used.

General Jean-Louis Romeuf, another former aide-de-camp to Lafayette and the French special envoy to Vienna for the Olmütz prisoners, was then told by Thugut that it was Lafayette who was holding up an agreement. A compromise was reached whereby Vienna could save face by turning the prisoners over to the Americans as an act of grace by the Emperor, instead of having to turn them over to the victorious French military.[28] No cover stories would be signed by the prisoners. This was all agreed to by August 9, though Vienna temporized for yet another six weeks. On September 19, the prisoners were transported out of Olmütz prison to Hamburg, still under guard, and finally released there on September 29, 1797.

Parts II to IV will appear in our next issue.

27. Masson had been a military aide to Lafayette. Masclet had been a lawyer for the Parliament of Paris in 1788, an enlisted lieutenant for France's Army up to 1792, and then the actual author of numerous articles on Lafayette in the London *Morning Chronicle,* under the pseudonym "Eleuthere." Maubourg was the young brother of Lafayette's fellow prisoner, Latour-Maubourg.

28. Actually, this measure had been proffered by America earlier. John Quincy Adams wrote to his father, President-elect Adams, back on February 16, 1797: "The Emperor by giving him up now to the application of the American government, will only be spared the mortification of being compelled to yield him to the claims of France."