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"UNE CONSPIRATION GÉNÉRALE:"
THE EXERCISE OF POWER BY THE AMERINDIANS
OF THE GREAT LAKES DURING
THE WAR OF THE AUSTRIAN SUCCESSION,
1744-1748

by

D. Peter MacLeod

Thesis submitted to
the School of Graduate Studies and Research
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the
Ph.D. degree in History.

Université d'Ottawa/University of Ottawa.



Peter MacLeod, Ottawa, Canada, 1992



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ABSTRACT

"UNE CONSPIRATION GÉNÉRALE:"
THE EXERCISE OF POWER BY THE AMERINDIANS
OF THE GREAT LAKES DURING
THE WAR OF THE AUSTRIAN SUCCESSION,
1744-1748

D. Peter MacLeod,
University of Ottawa, 1990

Supervisor:
Professor C.J. Jaenen

During the War of the Austrian Succession (1744-1748), four distinct groups—the British; the French; the Three Fires Confederacy (composed of the Odawa, Ojibwa, and Potawatomi), and an anti-French coalition sought to exercise power in the Great Lakes region. The British sought to enlist the Amerindians of the Lakes in their war against the French. The French attempted to mobilize Amerindians to attack British traders south of Lake Erie. Elements of some Amerindian nations formed a coalition which attempted to replace French with British traders in the Great Lakes region. The pro-French faction among the Three Fires Confederacy sought to avoid entanglement in French actions against the British south of Lake Erie, and to end the violence in the west. Of these groups, it was the Amerindians, particularly the Three Fires Confederacy, who proved capable of initiating and controlling events in the west. Their actions indicate that, in 1744-1748, the Amerindians of the Great Lakes retained their independence and freedom of action, and regarded European alliances as instruments of convenience, not

subordination. Moreover, in spite of French pretensions to overlordship and overlapping European claims to Amerindian territory, the Three Fires Confederacy were the paramount power in the Great Lakes region in the mid-eighteenth century.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank my advisor, Professor Cornelius J. Jaenen, both for his help in preparing this thesis, and for his support and encouragement during my years in the Ph.D. programme. I would also like to thank Micheline D'Allaire, Jean-Claude Dubé, and Julian Gwyn of the University of Ottawa; S.D. Standen, of Trent University, and Catherine Desbarats, of McGill University, for their advice and comments.

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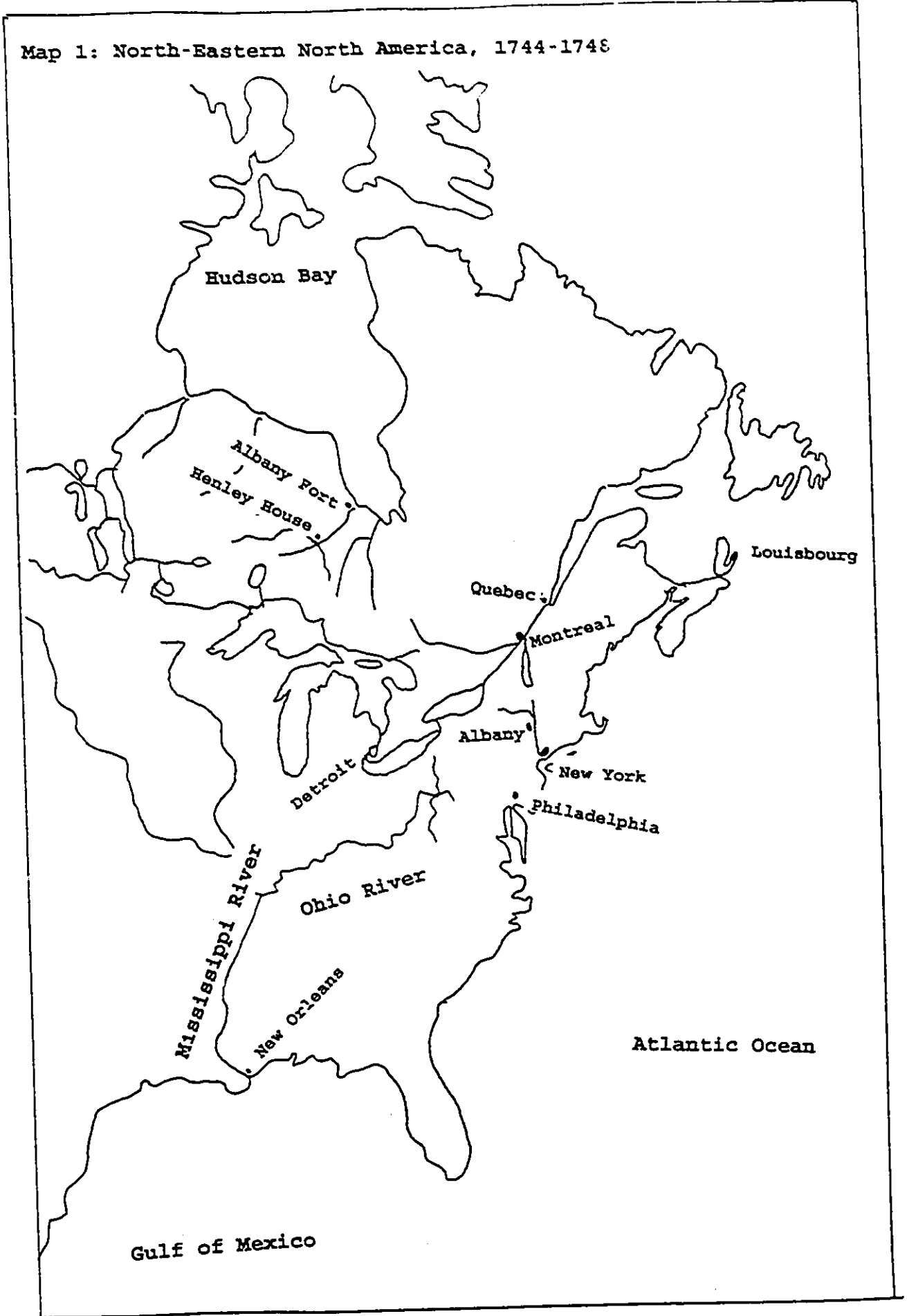
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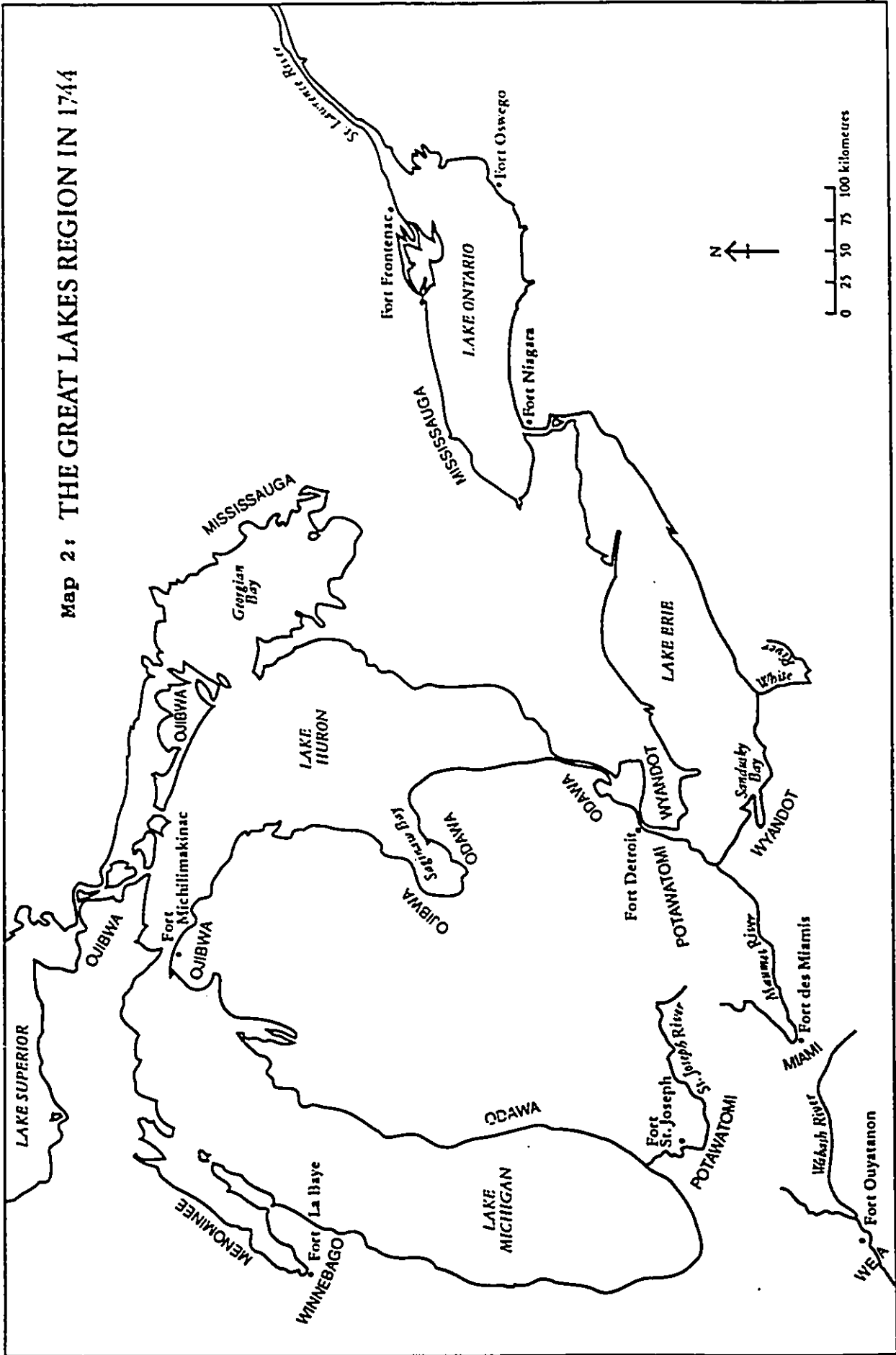
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Map 1: North-Eastern North America, 1744-1748



Map 2: THE GREAT LAKES REGION IN 1744



FRENCH AND ENGLISH NAMES FOR AMERINDIAN NATIONS

English	French
Abenakis	Abénaquis
Algonquins	Algonquins
Cahokias	Cahokias
Catawbas	Catawbas (Têtes-plates)
Chickasaws	Chickasaws
Crees	Cris
Dakotas	Sioux
Delawares	Loups
Foxes	Renards
Illinois	Illinois
Iroquois	Iroquois
Kickapoos	Kickapous
Mascoutens	Mascoutens
Menominees	Folles Avoines
Miamis	Miamis
Mississaugas	Mississagués
Mohawks	Agniers
Montagnais	Montagnais
Ojibwas	Sauteux, Ojibwés
Oneidas	Onneiouts
Onondagas	Onontagués
Odawas ¹	Outaouais
Potawatomis	Potéouatamis
Sauks	Sakis
Senecas	Tsonnontouans
Shawnees	Chaouanons
Weas	Ouiatanons
Winnebagos	Puants
Wyandots	Hurons de Détroit

¹"Odawa" was used in preference to the more familiar "Ottawa" since this spelling is preferred by Canadian Amerindians. See Johanna E. Feest, Christian F. Feest, "Ottawa," Bruce Trigger, ed., Handbook of North American Indians, volume 15, Northeast (Washington, 1978), p. 785.

INTRODUCTION

This study began as an attempt to write a military history of the War of the Austrian Succession in New France. Yet with the passage of time, it became apparent that to treat the entire war in the level of detail required in a dissertation was going to be a very lengthy enterprise, and would produce a very much longer thesis than the our department desired. The best solution appeared to be to submit only part of the original thesis. That section which dealt with events in the Great Lakes region seemed most appropriate.

The two thirty-page chapters that had been originally allocated to this topic had expanded in the writing to almost two hundred pages. Moreover, these chapters dealt with a single, very limited question, the ability of a variety of groups to influence events in the Great Lakes region between 1744 and 1748.

Taken together, these chapters form a case study in Franco-Amerindian relations. They represent an attempt to examine a narrow aspect of Franco-Amerindian relations in a very particular set of circumstances— those created by the outbreak of the War of the Austrian Succession. During this conflict, increased wartime demand and shortages caused by a British blockade limited the ability of the French to supply the western posts with trade goods, which in turn caused them to cease to fully fulfil an important aspect of their alliance with the Amerindians of that region.

This dissertation attempts to look at the events of 1744-1748 in the Great Lakes region in the context of the Franco-Amerindian alliance, and to use the war as an opportunity to consider the question of the balance of power in this alliance and the exercise of power in the Great Lakes region. By establishing the immediate¹ goals of each of the actors in the geopolitical arena and the means with which they attempted to achieve them, then assessing their respective achievements, this study seeks to establish which group was best able to exercise power in the region at that time. In so doing, it may provide a narrow study of the kind that can be used to support generalizations concerning the Amerindians of the Great Lakes and the Franco-Amerindian relationship.

Extensive studies have been made of the Iroquoian nations,² the Cree of James Bay,³ the Micmacs,⁴ and Abenakis.⁵ Histories of these

¹These goals were "immediate" in the sense that the various actors hoped to fulfil their objectives within a time span that could be measured in months.

²Denys Delâge, Le Pays renversé: Amérindiens et européens en Amérique du nord-est, 1600-1664 (Montreal, 1985); Francis Jennings, The Ambiguous Iroquois Empire: The Covenant Chain Confederation of Indian tribes with English Colonies from its beginnings to the Lancaster Treaty of 1744, (New York, 1984); Bruce G. Trigger, Natives and Newcomers: Canada's "Heroic Age" Reconsidered, (Kingston and Montreal, 1985); Trigger, The Children of Aataentsic: A History of the Huron People to 1660 (Kingston and Montreal, 1976).

³Daniel Francis, Toby Morantz, Partners in Furs: A History of the Fur Trade in Eastern James Bay, 1600-1870 (Kingston and Montreal, 1983); Paul C. Thistle, Indian-European Trade Relations in the Lower Saskatchewan River Region to 1840 (Winnipeg, 1986), Arthur J. Ray, Donald Freeman, 'Give Us Good Measure': An Economic Analysis of Relations between the Indians and the Hudson's Bay Company Before 1763 (Toronto, 1978), Ray, Indians in the Fur Trade:

nations generally cover the entire post-contact period, and are thus forced to devote relatively little space to consideration of Franco-Amerindian relations at any one time and place.⁶

The most important studies of French-Amerindian relations remain C.J. Jaenen, "French Sovereignty and Native Nationhood during the French Regime"⁷ and W.J. Eccles, "Sovereignty association, 1500-1783"⁸ The components of these studies dealing with relations between the French and the Amerindians of the Lakes have tended to be fragments of studies of Franco-Amerindian relations in general, which cover long periods of time, often in several different

their role as hunters, trappers and middlemen in the lands southwest of Hudson Bay, 1600-1870 (Toronto, 1974).

⁶O.P. Dickason, Louisbourg and the Indians: A Study in Imperial Race Relations, 1713-1760 (Ottawa, 1976); L.F.S. Upton, Micmacs and Colonists: Indian-White Relations in the Maritimes, 1713-1867 (Vancouver, 1979).

⁷Kenneth M. Morrison, The Embattled Northeast: The Elusive Ideal of Alliance in Abenaki-Euramerican Relations (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1984).

⁸Bert Anson, The Miami Indians (Norman, 1970); Charles A. Bishop, The Northern Ojibwa and the Fur Trade: An Historical and Ecological Study (Toronto, 1974); David Russell Edmunds, The Potawatomis: Keepers of the Fire (Norman, 1978); Harold Hickerson, The Chippewa and their Neighbours: A Study in Ethnohistory (New York, 1970); Felix M. Keesing, The Menominee Indians of Wisconsin: A Study of Three Centuries of Cultural Contact and Change (Madison, 1987); Peter S. Schmalz, The History of the Saugeen Indians (Ottawa, 1977).

⁷Native Studies Review, vol. 2, no. 1 (1986), pp. 83-113.

⁸Canadian Historical Review vol. LXV, no. 4 (December, 1984), pp. 475-510.

regions.⁹ The result has been a series of general assessments of Franco-Amerindian relations, which are very important, yet not anchored in an extensive collection of narrow studies of particular events, like S. Dale Standen's biography of the Marquis de Beauharnois, Richard Lortie's history of the Fox Wars, and Bruce White's study of the role of gifts in Ojibwa-European relations.¹⁰ This dissertation seeks to contribute to this collection of monographs by looking at the exercise of power by Europeans and Amerindians in a specific and very limited time and place.

This study is based almost exclusively upon French and British documents. There is, unfortunately, a dearth of records of the Amerindian version of the past comparable to that contained in European documents. The result is a serious lack of knowledge of activities of Amerindian decision makers. Instead, I had to look at overt manifestations of their decisions as recorded in European

⁹Denys Delâge, "L'alliance franco-amérindienne, 1660-1701," Recherches amérindiennes au Québec, vol. xix, no. 1(1989), pp. 3-16; W.J. Eccles, "Sovereignty Association, 1500-1783," Canadian Historical Review, vol. LXV, no. 4(December, 1984), pp. 475-510; C.J. Jaenen, "Characteristics of French-Amerindian Contact in New France," in Stanley H. Palmer, Dennis Reinhartz, eds., Essays on the History of North American Discovery and Exploration (College Station, Texas, 1987), pp. 87-92; Jaenen, The French Relationship with the Native Peoples of New France and Acadia (Ottawa, 1984), pp. 31-47.

¹⁰S. Dale Standen's "Charles, Marquis de Beauharnois de La Boische, Governor General of New France, 1726-1747," (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Toronto, 1975); Richard Lortie, "La Guerre des Renards, 1700-1740, ou Quatre Décennies de Résistance à l'Expansionnisme français," (M.A. thesis, Laval University, 1988), Bruce M. White, "Give Us a little Milk: Economics and Ceremony in the Ojibway Fur Trade," (M.A. thesis, McGill University, 1985).

documents, in particular, those statements made by Amerindians and recorded, usually in paraphrase, by Europeans, and whatever explanations were provided by Europeans. The private deliberations, and inner thoughts of Amerindian actors, were concealed from European observers at the time, and have so remained.

The nations of the Great Lakes were important powers in North-Eastern North America in the eighteenth century, and were possessed of their own particular interests, objectives, resources, and relationship with Europeans. During the French regime, the Amerindians of the Great Lakes were located beyond the limits of the European settlement and apparently were not threatened by European expansion. Indeed, the French authorities prohibited European settlement west of Montreal in 1664 and again in 1716,¹¹ and attempted to restrict commercial contacts between Frenchmen and Amerindians to authorized traders under the control of French officials. The Amerindians whose lands lay to the west of the Anglo-American colonies were deeply concerned with preserving the integrity of their territory in the face of steady westward expansion of the settlement frontier. Those of the Great Lakes, on the other hand, dealt with Europeans as commercial and military

¹¹Small farming communities at Detroit and in the Illinois country were later permitted.

partners, rather than competitors for resources.¹²

The nations which feature most prominently in this study are the Odawas, Ojibwas, Potawatomis, Miamis, and Wyandots, all of whom lived in the Great Lakes region in the 1740s. After the family, the basic unit of organization within these nations was the village. Terms like Odawa, Ojibwa and Potawatomi refer to collections of bands. Some nations were formed of only one village. Others, like the Odawa, Ojibwa and Potawatomi, were collections of bands, united by language, ethnicity, and formal alliance, which extended over most of the Great Lakes Region.

The peoples of the Great Lakes region can be divided into two categories. First, there were the Odawas, Ojibwas and Potawatomis. These nations had been formed from a variety of scattered Algonkian bands following the Iroquois wars of the seventeenth century. Together, they had provided the core of the alliance that had formed to resist the Iroquois and drive them out of what is now southern Ontario, which became the territory of the southern Ojibwas or Mississaugas. In the eighteenth century, these nations did not occupy a single territorial enclave. Instead, their villages were located around the shores of all of the Great Lakes.

A French enumeration in 1736 credited these nations with a total of

¹²Jaenen, "Characteristics of French-Amerindian Contact in New France," in Palmer, Reinhartz, eds., Essays on the History of North American Discovery and Exploration, pp. 86-87.

about twelve hundred warriors—460 Odawas, 480 Ojibwas, and 220 Potawatomis.¹³ In time of war, they were potentially capable of mobilizing a powerful striking force to further their interests or those of their allies. In 1757, at the siege of Fort William Henry by a Franco-Amerindian force, of 979 western Amerindians present, 723 or about seventy five percent, came from these nations.¹⁴

During the War of the Austrian Succession, members of the bands of these three nations worked together, never threatened one another, and pursued similar policies towards the French, British, and other Amerindians. Member bands might be internally divided, but these divisions cut across village and tribal limits, and existed in most bands of these nations. Disagreement was possible, war extremely unlikely.

For the purposes of this study, the Odawas, Ojibwas and Potawatomis, are referred to collectively as "The Three Fires

¹³"Dénombrement des nations de sauvages qui ont rapport au gouvernement de Canada; des guerriers de chacun avec leurs armories," France, Archives des Colonies [hereafter AC], C11A, vol. 66, National Archives of Canada [hereafter NAC], Manuscript Group [hereafter MG] 1, microfilm, reel F-66, folios [hereafter ff.] 236-247.

¹⁴"Tableau des Sauvages qui se trouvent à l'armée du marquis de Montcalm, le 28 Juillet 1757: Sauvages des pays d'en-haut," L.-A de Bougainville, "Journal de l'expédition d'Amérique commencée en l'année 1756, le 15 mars," Rapport de l'Archiviste de la Province de Québec, 1923-24, p. 288. This account of Amerindians fighting alongside the French was the most detailed enumeration that has survived from the War of the Austrian Succession and the Seven Years' War. There were 337 Odawas, 298 Ojibwas and Mississaugas, and 88 Potawatomis present at the siege.

Confederacy." Also referred to as the "Council of the Three Fires or "Confédération des Trois-Feu," this association was an alliance rather than actual confederation, and originated prior to 1750 in the area west of Detroit. This expression, strictly speaking, refers to villages of these nations in this region only, but is employed here as a convenient rubric to refer collectively to the three allied nations.¹⁵

When first contacted by Europeans, the Odawa lived on Manitoulin island, the Bruce Peninsula, and probably the shores of Georgian Bay. By the mid-eighteenth century, they were located along the shores of Lake Michigan, Lake Huron and the Detroit River. Their economy in the eighteenth century was based upon hunting and fishing and agriculture. The Odawa were closely linked by language, culture and formal alliance, to other Algonkian nations of the Great Lakes region, especially the Ojibwa and Potawatomi. Their ties with the Iroquoian Wyandots, although longstanding, were frequently tense. Allied to the French since the seventeenth century, factions of the Odawas were nonetheless continually open to initiatives of fur traders from New York and attempted to

¹⁵The expression "Three Fires Confederacy is used in this sense by Leroy V. Eid, "The Ojibwa-Iroquois War: The War the Five Nations Did Not Win," Ethnohistory, vol. XXVI, no. 4 (fall, 1979), p. 297; C.J. Jaenen in The French Relationship with the Native Peoples of New France and Acadia (Ottawa, 1984), p. 35 and Ian K. Steele, Betrayals: Fort William Henry & the "Massacre" (New York), 1990), p. 79. For a brief history of the Three Fires, see Harold Hickerson, "Council of the three Fires," in David M. Hayne, ed., Dictionary of Canadian Biography, volume II, 1701 to 1740 (Toronto, 1969), p. xxix.

establish closer political ties with this colony.¹⁶

The Odawa were closely allied with the Ojibwa, with whom they shared a similar language and culture. From their ancestral homeland north of Lakes Huron and Superior, the Ojibwa had in the seventeenth and eighteenth century expanded into the area west and south of Lakes Superior and what is now southern Ontario. Fishing, especially at Sault St. Marie, formed a mainstay of their economy, along with gathering wild rice, trapping, hunting, and small-scale farming. The Ojibwas formed close alliances with their Algonkian neighbours and were allied with the French from the seventeenth century until the end of the French regime. Although open to New York commercial contacts, many Ojibwas sent warriors to fight alongside the French until the fall of New France.¹⁷

The Potawatomi spoke a language distinct from that of the Ojibwa and Odawa. At the time of European contact, they lived on the Lower Michigan Peninsula. Fear of the Iroquois in the seventeenth century drove them to the Green Bay area, but they later recrossed Lake Michigan and in the 1740s, had one village at Detroit and other on

¹⁶Johanna E. Feest, Christian F. Feest, "Ottawa," in Bruce Trigger, ed., Handbook of North American Indians, volume 15, Northeast, (Washington, 1978), pp. 772-786; Plate 40: "France Secures the Interior, 1740-1755," Plate 44: "Indian War and American Invasion," in R. C. Harris, ed., Historical Atlas of Canada, volume I: From the Beginning to 1800 (Toronto, 1987).

¹⁷Robert E. Ritzenthaler, "Southwestern Chippewa," in Trigger, ed., Northeast, pp. 743-759; E.S. Rogers, "Southeastern Ojibwa," in ibid., pp. 760-771; Harris, ed., Historical Atlas of Canada, volume 1, plates 40, 44.

the St. Joseph River. The Potawatomi economy combined the cultivation of corn, squash, beans and tobacco, with hunting and fishing. The Potawatomis enjoyed close, friendly relationships with the Odawas and Ojibwas, and joined with them and the French in the alliances that formed against the Iroquois in the seventeenth century, and the Fox and Catawbas in the eighteenth century. Their alliance with the French also involved them in the wars of the French against the British North American colonies.¹⁸

Sharing the Great Lakes region with the Odawas, Ojibwas, and Potawatomis was a second category of nations. Between 1744 and 1748, either cooperation or hostility with the nations of the Three Fires confederacy bands might be possible, depending upon the circumstances. With these groups, which included the French, Miamis, Wyandots, Pennsylvanians and New Yorkers, pursuit of a goal, by the nations of the Three Fires Confederacy, could under some circumstances be more important for them than harmony. Of the other groups which feature prominently in this thesis, the Wyandots were allied to the nations of the Three Fires, yet they came close to waging war against the Odawa and Ojibwa in 1739, and threatened to do so again in 1747. A pro-British Miami village was attacked by the Odawa of Michilimakinac at the instigation of the French in 1751.

¹⁸James A. Clifton, "Potawatomi," in Trigger, ed., Northeast, pp. 725-742; Harris, ed., Historical Atlas of Canada, volume 1, plates 40, 44.

The Wyandot nation had been formed from remnants of the Hurons and Petuns who had been driven from the Georgian Bay region by the Iroquois in the mid-seventeenth century. They eventually settled in the Detroit region at the invitation of the French in the early eighteenth century. By 1744, the Wyandots had divided into separate villages located at Detroit and on Sandusky Bay on Lake Erie, where they supported themselves through agriculture, hunting and fishing. Although not as powerful as the pre-dispersal Hurons, the Wyandots continued to play an active role in the politics of the Great Lakes region, and entered into alliances with their Algonkian neighbours and the French. Their external relations were complicated by a tendency to waver between maintaining these alliances and establishing closer ties with the Iroquois in the late seventeenth century. Similar inclinations towards peace with the Catawbas bedeviled their relations with the Odawa and Ojibwa in the mid-eighteenth century. Their location at Detroit and hunting grounds south of Lake Erie brought them into close contact with Pennsylvania merchants, with whom they carried on an extensive trade.¹⁹ In 1736, the Wyandots were reported by the French to be able to muster 200 warriors.²⁰

¹⁹Elisabeth Tooker, "Wyandot," in Trigger, ed., Northeast, pp. 398-406; Harris, ed., Historical Atlas of Canada, volume I, plates 40, 44.

²⁰"Dénombrement des nations de sauvages qui ont rapport au gouvernement de Canada; des guerriers de chacun avec leurs armories," AC, C11A, vol. 66, NAC, MG 1, microfilm, reel F-66, ff. 236-247.

The Miamis, whose language was Algonkian, and closely related to that of the Illinois, rather than those of the nations of the Three Fires, resided on the upper Wabash and Maumee Rivers. The Weas, a distinct Miami tribe, occupied the middle Wabash River. Their economy was based upon a combination of hunting, maize farming, fishing, and gathering wild tubers and roots. The Miamis enjoyed close links with the Mascoutens and Kickapoos, and were allied to the French and the nations of the Three Fires Confederacy. In the eighteenth century, they had extensive contact with traders from Pennsylvania, which eventually led to the division of the Miamis into pro-French and pro-British factions.²¹ In 1736, the Miamis were considered by the French to be capable of fielding about 200 warriors and the Weas 350.²²

Included with the Wyandots and Miamis in this second category of peoples of the Great Lakes region were the French, who occupied a network of outposts located at strategic sites throughout the region. These outposts were commanded by military officers and garrisoned by regular soldiers. Yet under normal conditions, the French numerical presence in the west was quite small, and the French were heavily outnumbered by their Amerindian allies. In

²¹Charles Callender, "Miami," in Bruce Trigger, ed., Handbook of North American Indians, volume 15, Northeast, (Washington, 1978), p. 681; Harris, ed., Historical Atlas of Canada, volume 1, plates 40, 44.

²²"Dénombrement des nations de sauvages qui ont rapport au gouvernement de Canada; des guerriers de chacun avec leurs armories," AC, C11A, vol. 66, NAC, MG 1, microfilm, reel F-66, ff. 236-247.

1754, six years after the end of the War of the Austrian Succession there were only about one thousand Frenchmen in the west, of whom 130 were military personnel, including storekeepers, chaplains, interpreters, surgeons serving in a network of posts located at strategic points throughout the Great Lakes region.²³ Allied to the nations of the Three Fires, the Miamis and Wyandots, the French had fought with these nations against the Iroquois in the seventeenth century, and the Fox in the eighteenth, and turned to these allies for assistance in their wars with the British. The French attempted to control rivalries between their Amerindian allies and redirect their martial energies against enemies of France, in particular the Anglo-Americans, Catawbas and Chickasaws.²⁴

Other European groups that were active on the southern fringes of the Great Lakes region came from the British colonies. On the shores of Lake Ontario was the sole official, garrisoned, permanent British outpost beyond the Appalachians, Oswego. From here, New York merchants carried on an extensive trade with Amerindians from nations that were formally allied to the French, but were content to allow the furs to be carried to Oswego or Albany by Amerindians

²³Carleton to Shelburne, 2 March, 1768, Great Britain, Public Record Office, Colonial Office 42, "Canada, Original Correspondence," vol. 28, NAC, MG 11, microfilm, reel B-31, ff. 163-164; K.M. Brown, "La colonisation française de l'Illinois" une réévaluation," Revue d'histoire de l'Amérique française, vol. XXXIX, no. 4 (Spring, 1986), p. 586; W.J. Eccles, "The Fur Trade and Eighteenth Century French Imperialism," The William and Mary Quarterly, 3rd series, vol. XL (July, 1983), p. 355.

²⁴Dale Miquelon, New France, 1701-1744: 'A Supplement to Europe (Toronto, 1987), pp. 145-189.

or Canadian smugglers, rather than venturing into the west themselves. The colonial government was, in the years prior to 1744, unreceptive to Amerindians from the Great Lakes region seeking closer relationships with New York, although individual governors indulged in imperialist ambitions.²⁵

The merchants of Pennsylvania were more venturesome than the New Yorkers. They travelled over the Appalachians to trade with the Great Lakes Amerindians, and were well established in the area south of Lake Erie by the 1740s. The Pennsylvania government maintained no outposts comparable to Oswego or the French network of forts. Its activities in this area were limited to issuing trading licenses and passing regulations that were ignored.²⁶

During the 1740s, as before and after, members of all of these groups sought to exercise power in this region. "Power" has been defined many times, sometimes quite intricately.²⁷ One is powerful

²⁵T.E. Norton, The Fur Trade in Colonial New York, 1686-1776 ((Madison, 1974), pp. 121-197.

²⁶Paul Chrisler Phillips, The Fur Trade, volume I (Norman, 1961), pp. 400-403.

²⁷The material in the following three paragraphs is largely based upon Edward N. Luttwak, "Power and Force: Definitions and Implications," in The Grand Strategy of the Roman Empire: From the First Century A.D. to the Third (Baltimore, 1976), p. 197. This thesis is the second attempt to take the definition of power developed by Luttwak, who is best known as a student of twentieth century geopolitics, and to apply it to North America. The first was Ross Hassig, Aztec Warfare: Imperial Expansion and Political Control (Norman, 1988).

to the extent that one is able to initiate and control events. This is effected through control over resources, either directly or through others. In the latter case, which is the one that is most relevant to white-Amerindian relations in general, and the Franco-Amerindian alliance in particular, the exercise of power involves fulfilling goals by influencing members of other groups to comply with the wishes of the powerful.

When exercised by one group over another, power comes not from the actual strength—whether military, economic, or ideological—of those desiring to exercise power. Instead it depends upon the reaction of putative subordinate groups to the wishes of the powerful, and the extent to which they are willing to comply. Their decisions are made not in response to the real force deployed by the powerful, but according to their perceptions of this force. So to be perceived as able to impose costs and benefits upon those that one desires to influence is to be powerful and able to influence others. This ability to impose costs and benefits must be perceived by both the wielder and object of the power, for an actor who wishes to influence another must decide how the second group will react, and thus how the recipient perceives the putative wielder of power. This relationship is reciprocal, since each group has some power to affect the other.

The ability of Europeans and Amerindians to exercise power in the

west was put to the test during the 1740s, when the Odawa, Ojibwa, and Potawatomi, who together formed the Three Fires Confederacy, along with the Miami and Wea, and Wyandot, among others, and their French allies found themselves on a collision course. During the War of the Austrian Succession, the French planned to make use of Amerindian military resources to further their geopolitical goals. When wartime conditions prevented the French from providing adequate supplies of trade goods for the Amerindians of the region factions among some Amerindian nations formed a coalition which attempted to replace French traders with Pennsylvanians in the Great Lakes region. The Three Fires Confederacy sought to avoid entanglement in French actions against the British south of Lake Erie, and to end the violence in the west. The British tried to enlist the aid of the Amerindians of the Lakes in their war against the French.

The French tried but failed to mobilize Amerindian warriors to attack British outposts in the west. Many Amerindians felt that their best interests would be served by shifting their alliance, but not their allegiance, from the French to the British. This option entailed violent encounters with the French which placed the Franco-Amerindian alliance under considerable strain. These events make it possible to examine the Franco-Amerindian alliance under conditions of great stress, as Amerindians hunted down and killed isolated parties of Frenchmen and attacked French outposts, and the French contemplated military action to reduce their allies to

submission.

Events in the mid-1740s, when the European presence was long-established, make it clear that although the French evidently believed that Amerindians should be subordinate to them—wishful thinking that was reflected in their use of language—Amerindians were in fact as independent and capable of free action at the end of the French regime as at the beginning. During the French regime, the Amerindians of the Great Lakes region, used their alliances with the French as an instrument of convenience, never accepting subordination. Their actions in 1744-1748 were hardly those of a people who felt themselves to be under any obligation whatsoever to the French. Confronted with the situation created by the War of the Austrian Succession, the Amerindians of the lakes, particularly the Odawas, Ojibwas, and Potawatomis, had to decide how to react. This study will attempt to demonstrate that their decisions, and subsequent actions, would be decisive in determining the course of events in the Great Lakes region in 1744-1748.

CHAPTER 1:
AMERINDIAN WAR, ALLIANCE, AND TRADE
IN THE GREAT LAKES REGION IN THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

1.1 The Western Amerindians at War, 1744-1748

In the mid-eighteenth century, the most important group in the Lakes was the Three Fires, a loose confederacy of the Odawas, Ojibwas, and Potawatomis, whose members were less closely linked than the Iroquois or Wendat confederacies, but who cooperated to pursue military and economic ends.¹ Linked to them in a series of alliances were the Miami, Menominee, Wea, Winnebago, and Wyandot. These Amerindians, who dominated the Great Lakes region in the mid-eighteenth century, were linked by alliance to the French, while maintaining commercial ties with the British of New York, Pennsylvania, and Hudson Bay.

Members of these tribes lived by a combination of hunting, fishing, and agriculture, but males saw themselves as warriors. Participation in warfare was important to the adult males of these nations. Conflicts were occasionally of economic, demographic or territorial significance, but more often a sport in which participants sought status and personal fulfillment.² As a result,

¹The Odawa, Ojibwa and Potawatomi were referred to by the British as "The Lake Indians." Reginald Horsman, Matthew Elliot, British Indian Agent (Detroit, 1964), p. 80.

²For Amerindian warfare, see James Merrell, "'Their Very Bones Shall Fight': The Catawba-Iroquois Wars," in Daniel K. Richter, James Merrell, eds., Beyond the Covenant Chain: The Iroquois and their Neighbors in Indian North America, 1600-1800 (Syracuse, 1987), pp. 119-122, 132-133; Daniel K. Richter, "War and Culture:

they were continuously at war. The males of this region were fortunate in that they could chose from a wide spectrum of military activities against a variety of enemies.

First, and probably foremost, was the longstanding conflict between the Three Fires and the Dakota. By the 1730s, French traders pushing westward into Dakota country had undermined the basis for peaceful trading relationship between the Ojibwas and the Dakotas. The Ojibwa resumed their centuries old intermittent conflict with that tribe.³ Although of greatest economic interest to the Ojibwa of Lake Superior, this conflict attracted war parties of the Three Fires from as far away as the Mississaugas of Lake Ontario, together with Menominees, Winnebagos and Crees.⁴ Operations against the Dakota were undertaken without French support, and in the face

The Iroquois Experience," William and Mary Quarterly, third series, vol. XL, no. 4(October, 1983), pp. 528-559; Bruce G. Trigger, The Children of Aataentsic: A History of the Huron People to 1660, vol. I (Montreal and London, 1976), pp. 51, 68-75, 103, 144-147. J.G. Kohl, an American missionary living among the Ojibwa in the nineteenth century, described the mourning war in Kitchi-gami: Wanderings round Lake Superior (London, 1860), p. 67. He notes that "How little the Indians are prone to cupidity is seen in the character of their wars. ... When a young Indian prepares an expedition, he never dreams ... about the plunder he can obtain, but only of the relations he can avenge and the blood-foes he can punish..."

³Warren, History of the Ojibways, pp. 190-193.

⁴Beauharnois to Maurepas, 24 September, 1741, AC, C11A, vol. 75, NAC, MG 1, microfilm, reel F-75, f. 176; Beauharnois to Maurepas, 28 October, 1746, AC, C11A, vol. 85, NAC, MG 1, microfilm, reel F-85, f. 227v; Beauharnois to Maurepas, 3 November, 1746, AC, C11A, vol. 85, NAC, MG 1, microfilm, reel F-85, f. 234.

of French efforts to mediate and restrain their allies.⁵

To the south, the Three Fires, together with the Six Nations Iroquois, were waging a vigorous campaign against the Chickasaws and Catawba with French material support, and were receiving payments for Chickasaw and Catawba scalps.⁶ The Amerindians of the lakes were thus provided with adequate outlets for their martial inclinations. For male Amerindians, the Great Lakes region was the venue for mourning war, waged against Amerindian opponents. Yet to the east lay Europeans who laid claim to Amerindian territory, and sought to use this territory to further colonial and imperial interests. Since the signing of the Treaty of Utrecht in 1713, this

⁵Rather than aiding their longtime allies, the French sought to restrain them. For example, on 29 September, 1745, at Michilimakinac sixty-five livres worth of goods was "fournis pour arreter un parti des Sauteux [Ojibwa] qui se faisons pour venger la mort du grand chef de la pointe Nabaiejau tué par les Sious." ["Mémoire des fournitures que j'ay [Jean Baptiste Chevalier] faites pour le Roy a Monsieur de la Corne Capitaine Commandant en ce Poste [Michilimakinac]," AC, C11A, vol. 84, NAC, MG 1, microfilm, reel F-84, f. 273]. See also Beauharnois to Maurepas, 9 October, 1744, AC, C11A, vol. 81, NAC, MG 1, microfilm, reel F-81, ff. 161-161v; Beauharnois to Maurepas, 11 October, 1744, AC, C11A, vol. 81, NAC, MG 1, microfilm, reel F-81, ff. 166-166v; Beauharnois to Maurepas, 28 October, 1746, AC, C11A, vol. 85, NAC, MG 1, microfilm, reel F-85, f. 227v. For details of this policy, see Standen, "Charles, Marquis de Beauharnois," pp. 268-269, 290.

⁶Estat des fournitures faites par moy Michel Gamelin au Poste des Ouatanons pour le compte et service du Roy suivant les ordres de Monsieur de La pierre Commandant pour le Roy aud. lieu et ce depuis le cinq Septembre mil Sept cens quarante trois jusqu'au premier Juillet de l'année courante [1746], AC, C11A, vol. 85, ff. 284-290, NAC, MG 1, microfilm, reel F-85, "Memoire des ouvrages faits pour le compte et service du roy par l'ordre du mons. Douville commandant au fort des miamis pour Louis Edeline," AC, C11A, vol. 89, NAC, MG 1, microfilm, reel F-89, ff. 354-354v. French policy regarding the Catawba war is explained in detail in Standen, "Charles, Marquis de Beauharnois," pp. 299-300.

territory had also been the site of an overlapping cold war, waged between Europeans.

1.2 New France and the West

The bulk of the French population of North America might have lived within sight of the St. Lawrence river. Yet from the perspective of Versailles, the Laurentian valley was of small account compared to the pays d'en haut. Indeed, by the eighteenth century, the Laurentian heartland of New France was, from the perspective of the French empire as a whole, little more than an oversized staple entrepôt and a source of manpower for activities west of Montreal. The metropolitan government hoped to use the military resources of New France to limit the westward growth of the Anglo-American colonies, and thereby keep the British empire from becoming too powerful by expanding beyond the Appalachians into the Mississippi valley, and perhaps conquering Mexico and the French West Indies. Were this to happen, the British might one day rule an empire strong enough to dominate Europe and the western world.⁷

Thus when Pennsylvanian traders became active south of the Great Lakes, their activities generated considerable alarm in official circles in Quebec and Versailles. It seemed by the 1740s that a

⁷W.J. Eccles, "The Role of the American Colonies in Eighteenth Century French Foreign Policy," in Atti de I Congresso Internazionale de Storia Americana, Genova, 29 Maggio 1976 (Genoa, 1978), pp. 164-165.

familiar Anglo-American pattern was about to be reproduced. The traders, already on the scene, would be followed by financial investors and aggressive backwoodsmen, who would displace the original residents, as the Ohio tribes shared the fate of the Penobscots and Pequots of the Atlantic littoral. Within a generation, this region might harbour an Anglo-American population comparable to that of all of New France. Lake Erie would become a British preserve, the southern route to the west would be severed, and the western alliance would crumble as American traders flooded further into the west. A vast new market would open for British exports, and the British empire would be one step closer to the Mississippi valley and Spanish America.

Stopping them cold was the raison d'être of New France in the French empire. Rather than remain passive during the War of the Austrian Succession, as the Anglo-Americans consolidated their position on the Ohio, Charles Beauharnois de la Boische, Marquis de Beauharnois, Governor-General of New France since 1726, resolved to mobilize the western allies and unleash them upon the traders.* Inaction would lead to a British victory by default. Prompt measures might stem the tide before it became a flood which would sweep away the very foundations of the French empire in the west.

*S. Dale Standen, "Charles Beauharnois de la Boische, Marquis de Beauharnois," Frances G. Halpenny, ed., Dictionary of Canadian Biography, volume III, 1741-1770 (Toronto, 1974), pp. 41-51; Standen, "Charles, Marquis de Beauharnois de La Boische, Governor General of New France, 1726-1747," (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Toronto, 1975).

The thin chain of French posts in the west, in fact, were to be the front line of French attempts to maintain the balance of power in Europe and the Atlantic world.

Were New France to fulfil this role, a presence in the west was necessary, and to maintain this presence, the cooperation of the Native peoples was essential. A network of outposts in the west would have been of no use whatsoever to the French had they not established and maintained amicable, or at least mutually beneficial, relations with the Amerindians. Without that, they were merely hostile intruders in an alien land.

1.3 The Western Amerindians and the French

In the seventeenth century, the French and the western Amerindians had, by and large, stood together against the common enemy provided by the Iroquois. During this period the westerners, particularly the Odawa, benefited by acting as middlemen between Canada and other Amerindian groups.⁹ The Iroquois wars ended in 1701, and the penetration of French traders deeper into the west robbed the Odawa of their role as intermediary, and changed them from business partners to consumers.¹⁰

⁹Even then, however, the existence of an alternative source of European goods in New York introduced a discordance in French and Amerindian economic interests.

¹⁰Harold Hickerson, The Chippewa and Their Neighbours: A Study in Ethnohistory (New York, 1970), pp. 65-67.

As distributors, the nations of the Great Lakes had benefited from the exclusive custom of the French. As consumers, their interests lay in the presence of the least expensive and most abundant trade goods, which could best be assured by the presence of competing traders in the Great Lakes area. This led to a divergence of French and western economic interests. The western allies, nonetheless, would have withdrawn from the French alliance had they not profited from this relationship. As we shall see, when the costs incurred by alliance to the French outweighed the benefits, some Amerindians among the nations of the Three Fires Confederacy, the Miamis, and the Wyandot, began to consider the possibility of making new arrangements with New York or Pennsylvania that could fulfil the same goals.

The French lived in the west as partners, not occupiers. Their forts were service centres for the indigenous population. At these posts, Amerindians could conveniently obtain consumer goods and essential technical services provided by the French. The land on which they stood was Amerindian land, occupied with the consent of the Amerindians, as part of the complex web of mutual obligations that linked the French and Amerindians.¹¹

Under the terms of the Franco-Amerindian alliance, Amerindians

¹¹W. J. Eccles, "Sovereignty Association, 1500-1783," Canadian Historical Review, vol. 65, no. 4 (December, 1984), pp. 475-510; C.J. Jaenen, "The Role of Presents in French-Amerindian Trade," in Duncan Cameron, ed., Explorations in Canadian Economic History: Essays in Honour of Irene M. Spry (Ottawa, 1985), p. 244.

granted the French the right to trade, travel through, and reside in their ancestral territory in exchange for meeting the material needs of the Amerindians through a steady supply of European goods and technical services.¹² Not only were adequate quantities of goods and services to be made available to the Amerindians, but the terms of exchange had to be acceptable to them, and perceived as fair. In particular, they expected to receive a certain quantity of goods for their pelts.¹³ Finally, as trading partners, the French and the nations of the Lakes became military allies.

Beyond the economic exchange of manufactured goods for furs, the French each year subsidized their Amerindian allies with large

¹²In 1697, Ounanguissé, a leading Potawatomi chief, informed the French that any interruption in the supply of manufactured goods to the western nations would mean the end of the alliance. [Claude Charles Le Roy de la Potherie, Histoire de l'Amérique Septentrionale qui contient l'histoire des Iroquois, leurs Moeurs, leurs Maximes, leurs Coutumes, leur Gouvernement, leurs Interet avec les anglois leur Alliés, tous les mouvemens de guerre depuis 1689, jusqu'en 1701, leurs Négociations, leurs Ambassades pour la Paix generale avec les François, & les Peuples Alliés de la Nouvelle France, vol. III (Paris, 1753), pp. 301-302; Donald J. Horton, "Ounanguissé," in David M. Hayne, Dictionary of Canadian Biography, volume II, 1701 to 1740 (Toronto, 1969), p. 504].

¹³"accoutumez ... a vendre leurs pelleterie sur un certain pie[d], ils auront de la peine a se déterminer à ne recevoir en echange qu'une partie des marchandises qui leur estoient traités autre fois." [Beauharnois and Hocquart to Maurepas, 15 October, 1744, AC, C11A, vol. 81, NAC, MG 1, microfilm, reel F-81, ff. 43v-44]. For Amerindian attitudes towards price fluctuations in general, see Arthur J. Ray, Indians in the Fur Trade: their role as hunters, trappers and middlemen in the lands southwest of Hudson Bay, 1660-1870 (Toronto, 1974), pp. 62-63.

quantities of these goods and provided technical services.¹⁴ These goods and services served as a medium of communication and a political instrument, employed by the French both to fulfil the terms of the alliance and to manipulate their allies. Edmond Atkin, the British southern Indian Superintendent commented in 1754 that "The Principal" arts practised by the French to cement their relationships with Amerindians were "the Provision of Gunsmiths, and not so much valuable Presents as a judicious application of them."¹⁵ The French used these transfers of goods and services to subsidize actions of which they approved, while withholding this support from actions of which they disapproved; they made payments to Amerindians as compensation to prevent them from acting in a manner contrary to French interests; and they paid subsidies to influential tribesmen who could be counted to act in a generally pro-French manner.

¹⁴These activities generated a considerable paper trail. When the commandant of a French post decided to give over goods, he did not distribute them from a Crown store, but had the local trader provide them from his commercial stores. The trader submitted an account to the intendant for reimbursement, which specified the type and quantity of goods, the price, and to whom and for what purpose they were delivered. This document was countersigned by the commandant, the governor general or the intendant, and the controller general, thereby generating a paper trail which provides considerable insight with regard to this aspect of the Franco-Amerindian relationship, and actions by the Amerindians which do not appear in other sources. Unfortunately, these documents are not available for all posts all of the time, nor are they all as detailed as one might like.

¹⁵Edmond Atkin to the Board of Trade, 1754, reprinted as Wilbur R. Jacobs, ed., The Appalachian Indian Frontier: The Edmond Atkin Report and Plan of 1755 (Lincoln, 1967), p. 9. [hereafter Atkin, Report].

At the western posts, most goods were not simply transferred unconditionally. They were presented in response to specific needs of the Amerindians and the French. The French did not always ask for the performance of a particular service or for permission to remain in Amerindian territory in exchange for a trade item. Instead, a steady series of gifts were presented in the course of the year, in response to specific events, such as the departure of a war party or the death of a chief. On other occasions, the presentation of gifts was linked directly to actions by Amerindians. For example, the French, who attempted to manipulate the military activities of these tribes for their own ends, intervened to prevent new conflicts from breaking out. On 2 April, 1745, an Iroquois, was given a quantity of trade goods "pour appaiser une guerre entre les Iroquois et les pianguichias [Miamis]."¹⁶

Nor were goods simply presented to the nation as a whole. Instead, the French most often selected one leading member of a band, and used this person as a channel for the delivery of manufactured

¹⁶"Memoire des Effets qui ont été livrés des Magasins de Monsieur de Charly au poste des Miamis et delivrés en 1745 pour M. Gouin commis et Garde ded. Magasins, suivant les ordres de Monsieur Douville commandant du roy comme cy après" [AC, C11A, vol 84, NAC, MG 1, microfilm, reel F-84, f. 259]. On 26 April, a further payment of eighty-one livres worth of clothing, blankets, tobacco, brandy, and wheat was paid to obtain the release of "un iroquois pris par les pianguichichias [Miamis]." ["Memoire des Effets qui ont été livrés des Magasins de Monsieur de Charly au poste des Miamis et delivrés en 1745 pour M. Gouin commis et Garde ded. Magasins, suivant les ordres de Monsieur Douville commandant du roy comme cy après," AC, C11A, vol 84, NAC, MG 1, microfilm, reel F-84, f. 259v].

goods to his band.¹⁷ An Anglo-American official observed in 1755 that "a present of any value is never given by them but to an Indian of Sway and Consequence among the Warriours [sic], or as an Orator among the people."¹⁸ This provided an aspiring Amerindian leader with an attractive source of patronage. Just as a hunter could rise in prestige by distributing the products of the hunt, a leader favoured by the French could reinforce his position by distributing largesse at the expense of his European associates. Established chiefs were likewise able to maintain their position by redistributing French gifts.

Chiefs could expect to receive goods in their own right "pour les maintenir dans de bonnes dispositions,"¹⁹ "pour lui recommander les françois du fort,"²⁰ or formally to console them for the deaths of

¹⁷Of transfers of goods to Amerindians at Ouyatanon between September, 1743 and July, 1746, nineteen were given to parties of Amerindians, accompanied by a named chief, thirty-two given directly to a chief, and three handed out in council. see "Estat des fournitures faites par moy Michel Gamelin au Poste des ouatanons pour le compte et fermier du roy suivant les ordres de Monsieur de Lapierre commandant pour le roy aud. lieu et ce depuis le cinq September mil sept cens quarante trois jusqu'au première juillet de l'année courante [1746]." [AC, C11A, vol. 85, NAC, MG 1, microfilm, reel F-85, ff. 284-290].

¹⁸Atkin, Report, p. 10.

¹⁹"Estat des fournitures faites par moy Michel Gamelin au Poste des ouatanons," [AC, C11A, vol. 85, NAC, MG 1, microfilm, reel F-85, ff. 286, 287, 288].

²⁰"Memoire des Marchandises tirés du Magasin de feu a Mon'r Charly adjudicataire du poste des Miamis," [AC, C11A, vol. 89, NAC, MG 1, microfilm, reel F-89, f. 361v].

relatives.²¹ As leaders, they received goods that were given in the expectations that they would act in accordance with French interests. For example, various goods were presented to two Miami chiefs, "pour arrester leurs jeunesse qui vouloit aller fraper sur les hurons,"²² and two chiefs of the Ouyatanons were given brandy, cloth, clothing, vermillon and tobacco "pour les encourager a maintenir leur jeunesse dans de bonnes dispositions."²³

It seems from these requests for payment for gifts to Amerindian leaders that gifts were offered to the war chiefs only, with very few exceptions, as opposed to the headmen or village chiefs. Young men are the only group (apart from the war chiefs) singled out and named as beneficiaries. All of these presentations of goods were for military and diplomatic purposes, regarding the war and the alliance. None were for trade. There may have been separate gifts given to Amerindian leaders for trade by the farmers and their representatives, but these were not recorded in official documents submitted to the intendant for reimbursement. It is possible that there were separate trading captains, or the War chiefs may have

²¹See the list of gifts presented at Fort Ouyatanons in 1746 "pour couvrir la mort de la fille du tems clair." ["Estat des fournitures faites par moy Michel Gamelin au Poste des ouatanons pour le compte et fermier du roy suivant les ordres de Monsieur de Lapierre commandant pour le roy aud. lieu et ce depuis le cinq September mil sept cens quarante trois jusqu'au premiere juillet de l'année courante [1746]," AC, C11A, vol. 85, NAC, MG 1, microfilm, reel F-85, f. 289].

²²ibid., f. 287.

²³ibid., ff. 286, 287, 288.

controlled all contact between the French and the Amerindians. In any case, the French by this means created an in-group of leaders, who could use French goods to reinforce their position. An inevitable consequence, was that ambitious individuals who did not receive this bounty might seek an alternative source among the English.

French material support for Amerindian military activities was of great importance to Amerindian males. Partnership with the French subsidized traditional military practices used by warriors for recreation and prestige. The economic costs of war to Amerindians, both in forgone production and material expenditure, were considerable. Writing in the nineteenth century, a Euramerican observer of the Ojibwas (who were then involved in a major war with the Dakotas) stated that:

These wars— even the successful and victorious ones— are so far from being a source of profit to them, that they often entail heavy expenses on them. A chief who designs war will ruin himself and give his last farthing to equip his followers for the war-trail. And when they return from the wars their clothes are torn, their moccasins worn out, perhaps their entire flotilla expended.²⁴

The provision of material support by the French helped Amerindians overcome economic limitations on participation in military activities by providing expensive goods, which reduced the costs, both of expended matériel and loss of production, to Amerindian society.

²⁴Kohl, Kitchi-gami: Wanderings round Lake Superior, p. 67.

Moreover, extensive use of firearms by Amerindians necessitated French technical support for Amerindian military venture. These weapons often required repair to make them fit for service, and Europeans enjoyed monopolies both of technical skills and spare parts, which they could elect to grant or withhold.²⁵ The services of gunsmiths were thus greatly prized by Amerindians. "When an Indian," wrote an Anglo-American official in 1755:

after undergoing the mortification of having a gun ... suddenly by some slight accident to the lock, or Touch hold, render'd intirelly useless to him, I say when he sees it afterwards as suddenly restored to its former state, and as useful as before, it gladdens his heart more than a present of a new gun would ... [the smith] hath as it were new made it [the gun] for nothing.²⁶

The Franco-Amerindian alliance provided essential goods and services to Amerindians, and was of the greatest importance to the French empire, yet it remained as vulnerable to disruption as it was longstanding. Its very strength was also its greatest weakness. For this alliance provided both parties with services which they considered essential. Should their needs change, or cease to be met, either partner could be forced to look elsewhere for groups that could meet its needs. In practice, this option was open only to the Amerindians, since the French had no choice but to deal with the Amerindians of the Lakes. The Amerindians, could find

²⁵Spare parts are generally absent from lists of fur trade goods. see, for example, "Memoire des marchandises Nécessaire pour le commerce de Niagara et fort frontenac, a Envoyer en 1746," AC, C11A, vol. 83, NAC, MG 1, microfilm, reel F-83, f. 283.

²⁶Atkin, Report, pp. 9-10.

convenient alternative sources of the goods and services which they received from the French among the Anglo-American traders from New York and Pennsylvania.

As long as the French were able to supply their Amerindian partners with the European goods and services that they required, the alliance held firm. But were this flow of goods and services to fall off or end, the consequences for the alliance would be fatal. For the western allies could no more remain in an alliance that could not supply their economic needs than a late twentieth century nation state could survive the severing of its oil supply.

1.4 The Western Amerindians and the British

When they chose their allies and trading partners, Amerindians consulted their own perceived interests, not those of the British or French. In the first half of the eighteenth century, a significant number of persons in nations nominally allied to the French felt that those interests were best served by closer ties to New York or Pennsylvania.²⁷ Commercial contacts with the Anglo-Americans dated back to the seventeenth century. According to Amerindian practice, economic links were a prelude to closer

²⁷The French did their best to limit these contacts. In 1742, for example, a French officer was ordered to "hiverner chaque année avec les Outa8as [Odawas] du Saguinan, afin de les empêcher d'aller en traite chés les Anglois." [Beauharnois and Hocquart to Maurepas, 9 September, 1742, AC, C11A, vol. 77, NAC, MG 1, microfilm, reel F-77, ff. 95-95v].

political and military ties. In particular, the Odawas and Wyandots sought in the decade prior to the War of the Austrian Succession to establish more structured relationships with New York. The Wyandot were fairly successful, but the overtures of the Odawa were consistently ignored.

In 1735, tentative approaches were made through Cayuga emissaries to New York by the Odawa. They offered to relocate to a place convenient for trading at Oswego, but met with no response.²⁸ Four years later, a Mohawk delegation passed on complaints that "the Cov' chain with the upper & western Nations is not kept so Bright as formerly."²⁹ In 1742, the Odawas informed the Commissary at Oswego "they were surprized[sic] our Gov' had not sent to speak with them & renew the Cov' between Our Gov' & them as they bring all their Goods to Oswego & think they ought to have been invited down [for

²⁸Peter Wraxall, An Abridgement of the Indian Affairs contained in four folio volumes, transacted in the colony of New York, from the year 1678 to the year 1751 (New York, 1968), pp. 191-192. Wraxall commented that "would it not have been good policy to have dispatched this Indian with presents & a message to the Wagenhaes [Odawa] to have kept up & encreased this good disposition of theirs...had such a circumstance happened to the french, they I am persuaded would immediately have sent an embassy & forwarded the removal of their Castle, but our Albany commiss" are too fat headed...for so judicious & active a conduct.

²⁹Wraxall, An Abridgement of the Indian Affairs, p. 214, 214n. Wraxall noted that "this observation of the Mohawks seems to be well grounded, for I have not met with any conference or Negotiation in the records for several years past with the Western Indians." He suspected that the reopening of trade between Albany and Canada prevented it, for "y' other ceased at y' same time." They continued to trade as Oswego, but did not carry on negotiations.

a conference] as well as the Six Nations."³⁰ They repeated this in 1744, when the Commissary reported that the Odawas trading at Oswego had "told him that if they were sent for in form to come to Albany to treat they would readily come," but once again encountered indifference.³¹

The Wyandots had more pressing motives for seeking greater intimacy with New York. In 1738, they had made peace with the Catawbas, and subsequently been accused of betraying a party of Odawas, Ojibwas and Potawatomis to this nation. Fearing the retaliation of the Three Fires, a faction of the Wyandots left Detroit for Sandusky. They asked the French for permission to settle in the Laurentian valley, but this failed to materialize.³² Finding that "tant qu'ils seront en paix avec les testes-plates, ils ne vivront jamais tranquils avec les nations qu'ils ont trahies,"³³ the Wyandots appear to have elected to seek closer ties to New York, for in July of 1743, three sachems came to Albany to renew their alliance with

³⁰Wraxall, An Abridgement of the Indian Affairs, p. 228.

³¹Wraxall, An Abridgement of the Indian Affairs, p. 237.

³²Beauharnois to Maurepas, 6 October, 1738, AC, C11A, vol. 69, NAC, MG 1, microfilm, reel F-69, ff. 125-129; Hocquart to maurepas, 22 October, 1738, AC, C11A, vol. 70, NAC, MG 1, microfilm, reel F-70, ff. 118-119; Beauharnois to Maurepas, 6 November, 1739, AC, C11A, vol. 71, NAC, MG 1, microfilm, reel F-71, f. 86v; Beauharnois to Maurepas, 1 October, 1740, AC, C11A, vol. 74, NAC, MG 1, microfilm, reel F-74, f. 81v; Beauharnois to Maurepas, 11 June, 1742, AC, C11A, vol. 77, NAC, MG 1, microfilm, reel F-77, ff. 281-281v.

³³Beauharnois to Maurepas, 15 September, 1741, AC, C11A, vol. 75, NAC, MG 1, microfilm, reel F-75, f. 123.

the New Yorkers and Six Nations in a meeting with the New York Indian Commissioners.³⁴

It is convenient to create a simple model of Amerindian behaviour, by dividing a band into "pro-British" and "pro-French" factions. This model, however, describes, rather than explains, external behaviour at a given time, rather than allegiance. These terms can best be understood as shorthand expressions for persons and groups who believed that their interests as political leaders and war chiefs, and the interests of their bands, would best be served by closer association with one European power or the other, and who acted accordingly. Some Wyandot leaders, for example, sought to resolve the problems of their nation first by attempting to relocate to French controlled territory in the Laurentian valley, then by entering the Anglo-Amerindian covenant chain. Factions of the Miami might be classified as "pro-British" and "pro-French," but in reality both were very much pro-Miami.

³⁴The Wyandot had received a British belt from the commissioners c. 1704, representing that "there should be an everlasting peace between this govt the 5 Nations & their nation & that the road should be kept open & secure between their country & this city with free liberty of trade & all other rights of Hospitality. This agreement was renewed c. 1706 and c. 1722. The covenant was renewed and the two groups exchanged belts of wampum. Wraxall, An Abridgement of the Indian Affairs, pp. 230-231; Provincial Council of Pennsylvania, from the organization to the termination of the proprietary government, published by the state. volume V., containing the proceedings of council from December 17th, 1745, to 20th March, 1754, both days included (Harrisburg: Theo. Fenn & Co., 1851, reprinted New York: AMS Press, 1968), [hereafter Minutes of the Provincial Council of Pennsylvania], 8 September, 1748, p. 352.

1.5 The outbreak of the War of the Austrian Succession

The Amerindians of the interior of North America might retain their freedom of action in the mid-eighteenth century, but they could not escape the consequences of integration into the Atlantic world. The enforcement of commercial regulations in Spanish America, the possession of Silesia, and the balance of power in Europe were of no particular concern to the Amerindians of the Lakes in themselves, but they led to war between England and France, in what has become known as the War of the Austrian Succession (1744-1748). With the métropoles at war, the conflict quickly spread to North America.³⁵ Fighting between European empires in North America took place far from the Great Lakes. Nonetheless, the economic effects of the war were to reach out to every Amerindian in the French alliance, and force individuals and nations to reassess their relationship with both the Anglo-Americans and the French, and consider what action would be necessary to protect their interests.

³⁵For the European origins of the War, see Jeremy Black, Natural and Necessary Enemies: Anglo-French relations in the eighteenth century (Athens, 1987), pp. 36-47; Jeremy Black, "British Foreign Policy and the War of the Austrian Succession, 1740-1748: A Research Priority," Canadian Journal of History/Annales Canadiennes d'Histoire, vol. XXI, no. 3 (December, 1986), pp. 313-331. For the War of the Austrian Succession in North America, see S. D. Standen, "Charles, Marquis de Beauharnois de La Boische, Governor General of New France, 1726-1747," (Ph. D. dissertation, University of Toronto, 1975), pp. 399-446; George F.G. Stanley, New France: The Last Phase, 1744-1760 (Toronto 1968), pp. 1-34; Ian K. Steele, Guerillas and Grenadiers: The Struggle For Canada, 1689-1760 (Toronto, 1969), 46-52.

CHAPTER 2:
GROWING TENSION IN THE GREAT LAKES REGION, 1744-1747

2.1 Amerindian responses to French plans for operations in the west, 1744-1746

When the War of the Austrian Succession began, the Amerindians of the Lakes they were already under pressure from the French to make war upon the British. Concerned by the growing Pennsylvanian presence south of Lake Erie, the French sought to sponsor Amerindian raids against Anglo-American traders south of Lake Erie. That this would entail an invasion of the territory of the Amerindians of the White River is never mentioned in French documents.

When open Anglo-French war broke out, the western allies received renewed invitations from the commandants of posts in the west and the Governor-General in Canada to participate in operations against the Anglo-Americans in the west. Their services were not required elsewhere, since no operations in the central theatre were then planned, and they would not be needed for the reconquest of Acadia. Reports from the western posts of Amerindian responses were uniformly optimistic.¹

The Miamis and Weas agreed to attack the Anglo-Americans during the

¹The western allies were described as displaying "de l'ardeur et du zèle. "Beauharnois to Maurepas, 7 November, 1744, AC, C11A, vol. 81, NAC, MG 1, microfilm, reel F-81, f. 126v.

winter of 1744-1745.² The Odawas and Potawatomis, who had descended in force³ to Montreal in the summer of 1744, accepted the war axe presented to them by Beauharnois. According to French sources, they confirmed a previous agreement to initiate attacks in the White River country during the forthcoming winter. Their statements at that conference, together with the reports of the commandants of the western posts regarding the intentions of the Amerindians, were sufficiently encouraging to make Beauharnois believe that his diplomatic initiatives had been successful.⁴ "Je suis," wrote Beauharnois, "en quelque fasson, persuadé qu'ils agiront cet hyver (comme ils me l'ont fait promettre) contre les établissemens[sic] des anglois."⁵

French officials, however, may have misread the situation. According to intelligence gathered by New Yorkers from Amerindians at Oswego, the allies were more circumspect:

We have made it our business to find out whether the Ffrench [sic] Indians had taken up the Hatchett [sic] against us; all we can learn is that at a Meeting between the Ffrench [sic] and Indians, severall ffatt [sic] cattle were killed and presented the latter, The Ffrench [sic] dancing after the Method of the Indians with the Heads of Beasts in their Hands, saying, thus will we

²Beauharnois to Maurepas, 7 November, 1744, AC, C11A, vol. 81, NAC, MG 1, microfilm, reel F-81, f. 126v.

³Hocquart to Maurepas, 9 July, AC, C11A, vol. 81, NAC, MG 1, microfilm, reel F-81, f. 246.

⁴Beauharnois to Maurepas, 8 October, 1744, AC, C11A, vol. 81, NAC, MG 1, microfilm, reel F-81, ff. 144v-145.

⁵Beauharnois to Maurepas, 9 October, 1744, AC, C11A, vol. 81, NAC, MG 1, microfilm, reel F-81, ff. 160-160v.

carry the Heads of the English. The Indians in their turns danced, but said, thus will we carry the Heads of the Fflatheads [sic, Catawbas], which made the Ffrench [sic] look very down, as they undoubtedly hoped to have been Joyn'd [sic].⁶

With the apparent cooperation of his allies obtained, Beauharnois planned his attacks. One obvious target, Fort Oswego, the lone British outpost beyond the Appalachians, was protected⁷ by the Iroquois, who made it clear that they would not tolerate acts of war on their territory.⁸ But with Britain and France openly at war, he was able to add attacks on the Hudson's Bay Company posts scattered along the shore of James Bay to his planned strikes on the White River.

British traders at Hudson Bay provided competition in some of the richest fur country of the Canadian north.⁹ A victory here could secure this trade for the French, and go a long way towards reversing the effects of the Treaty of Utrecht. Moreover, in 1743, the Hudson's Bay Company had begun to expand inland and had erected Henley House, at the forks of the Albany River, about two hundred kilometres inland from Hudson Bay, in order that its six person

⁶"Information of the officer at Oswego ab' Indian affairs, Dec' 1744," Samuel Hazard, ed., Pennsylvania Archives. Selected and Arranged from original documents in the office of the secretary of the Commonwealth, conformably to acts of the General Assembly, February 15, 1851 & March 1, 1852, commencing 1644 [-1747], first series, vol. I (Philadelphia, 1852), p. 665.

⁷Together with Forts Niagara and Frontenac.

⁸Standen, "Charles, Marquis de Beauharnois," pp. 409-410.

⁹Standen, "Charles, Marquis de Beauharnois," pp. 269, 407-408.

complement might neutralize the French habit of meeting the Amerindians inland, trading for their most valuable pelts.¹⁰ With the outbreak of war, Beauharnois sent orders to Paul Guillet,¹¹ a Canadian merchant who had traded at Temiscaming since 1724, and was believed to have secured the confidence of the local Algonquins, Crees, Montagnais and Ojibwas, to invite these Amerindians to join the French in an attack upon the James Bay posts in the spring of 1745. In addition, Beauharnois sent orders to Michilimakinac and other northern posts to invite the local Amerindians to participate, so that "tous puissent concourir ensemble à la destruction des etablissements des anglois du coté du nord."¹²

¹⁰Joseph Isbister, the Master of Fort Albany, had established this post without orders from London. When the committee learned of its existence, they had grudgingly accepted it, but on condition that it be an outpost rather than a full fledged trading station, where Amerindians could obtain a few goods, and see samples of the merchandise that was available at Fort Albany. In the event of an attack, it was to be abandoned. E.E. Rich, The History of the Hudson's Bay Company, 1670-1870, volume I: 1670-1763 (London, 1958), p. 613; E.E. Rich, The Fur Trade and the Northwest to 1857 (Toronto, 1967), pp. 101-102, 105-106. Jean de Laporte de Lalanne, [Donald J. Horton, "Jean de Laporte de Lalanne," in Frances G. Halpenny, ed., Dictionary of Canadian Biography, volume III, 1741 to 1770 (Toronto, 1974), pp. 354-355], the new commandant of Fort Nipegon, on Lake Nipegon, north of Lake Superior, was assigned the task of destroying Henley house, twenty leagues above the French post at Michipicoten. The French believed that the post had been established by a Canadian renegade, who brought eight traders there. The post was to be destroyed by open force, and the Canadian arrested. [Beauharnois to Maurepas, 8 October, 1744, AC, C11A, vol. 81, NAC, MG 1, microfilm, reel F-81, ff. 145-146; Beauharnois and Hocquart to Maurepas, 14 October, 1744, AC, C11A, vol. 81, NAC, MG 1, microfilm, reel F-81, f. 39.]

¹¹Andrew Rodger, "Joseph de Fleury de la Gorgendière," in Frances G. Halpenny, ed., Dictionary of Canadian Biography, volume III, 1741 to 1770 (Toronto, 1974), pp. 216-218.

¹²Beauharnois to Maurepas, 8 October, 1744, AC, C11A, vol. 81, NAC, MG 1, microfilm, reel F-81, f. 145.

The winter of 1744-1745 passed without the despatch of a Franco-Amerindian force to Temiscaming, and in 1745 the northern offensive was quietly suspended.¹³ Guillet was instructed to keep the local Cree in readiness to join in an attack "si les circonstances devienne [sic] plus favourable" but the Hudson's Bay men were left to ply their trade in peace for the remainder of the war.¹⁴

The plan for attacks on Hudson Bay posts was feasible from the tactical point of view.¹⁵ A successful offensive would have eliminated the threat posed by the Hudson's Bay Company to the northern fur trade, and reduced the concomitant need for an expensive presence in the Western Sea. However, the activities of the Hudson's Bay Company here posed a threat only to the northern

¹³Hocquart to Maurepas, 19 May, 1745, 1745, AC, C11A, vol. 83, NAC, MG 1, microfilm, reel F-83, f. 157v; Beauharnois to Maurepas, 28 October, 1746, AC, C11A, vol. 85, NAC, MG 1, microfilm, reel F-85, f. 228v.

¹⁴Beauharnois and Hocquart to Machault, 17 October, 1746, AC, C11A, vol. 85, NAC, MG 1, microfilm, reel F-85, f. 85v.

¹⁵In 1686, a French force of thirty colonial regulars and seventy militiamen marched overland from Montreal via the Ottawa and Abitibi rivers and captured Moose Factory, Rupert House, and Fort Albany in rapid succession. [see W.A. Kenyon and J.R. Turnbull, The Battle for James Bay, 1686 (Toronto, 1971), which contains a number of contemporary French and British accounts of the expedition]. Nor were the French unrealistic in expecting that the Cree could be persuaded to fight against the British. In 1754 Wappisis, the Captain of the "Home Indians" of Albany and five companions attacked and killed the British traders residing at Henly House. [Rich, The History of the Hudson's Bay Company, p. 613].

fur trade, which had more economic than political significance.¹⁶ The posts at James Bay presented an alluring target, but operations in the north would have consumed too many resources that would have been taken from the western allies, the Acadian enterprise, and the defence of Canada. The Bay area was of marginal concern compared to the Ohio valley, where the French stood squarely in the path of Anglo-American westward expansion.¹⁷

In the course of the eighteenth century, the vacuum in the Ohio valley created by the dispersal of the Erie and other tribes of the area was slowly filled by members of other tribes, as Delawares, Iroquois, and Shawnees filtered westward, and the Wyandots and Miamis moved eastward and southward. In the wake of the westward movement of Amerindians came Anglo-American fur traders based in Pennsylvania.¹⁸ Their commercial activities reached as far as the tribes settled near Detroit, where the Wyandots of Detroit "ne font

¹⁶Even success might have drawn the French into a protracted war on the northern front that they could not afford, similar to that which occurred between 1686 and 1713, when both the British and the French took, lost, and recaptured post after post on the shores of James and Hudson Bay.

¹⁷For French interests in the Ohio valley, see Standen, "Charles, Marquis de Beauharnois," pp. 300-301.

¹⁸Michael N. McConnell, "Peoples In Between: The Iroquois and the Ohio Indians, 1720-1768," in Daniel K. Richter and James H. Merrell, eds. Beyond the Covenant Chain: The Iroquois and their Neighbors in Indian North America, 1600-1800 (Syracuse, 1987), pp. 93-95; Francis Jennings, The Ambiguous Iroquois Empire: The Covenant Chain Confederation of Indian Tribes with English Colonies from its beginnings to the Lancaster Treaty of 1744 (New York, 1984), pp. pp. 350-353.

point difficulté d'aller chercher pendant l'hyver les ... anglois pour les guider jusques a leurs cabanes d'hyvernement pour traiter avec eux."¹⁹

The point of the lance aimed at the French was the mouth of the Cuyahoga River (called the White River by the French).²⁰ In the decade prior to the war of the Austrian Succession a community had formed there composed of members of a variety of nations including the Abenakis, Cayugas, Delawares, Mississaugas, Mohawks, Odawas,²¹ Oneidas, Onondagas, and Senecas.²²

Beauharnois had considered attempting to break up this settlement

¹⁹"Mémoire d'observation fait par moy Navarre du poste ou commerce le nommé françois saguin, des diverses nations qui y sont établis et du commerce qui s'y peut faire, la dite observation faite en conséquence des ordres de M. de Celeron qui m'y a envoyé pour prendre connoissance des choses et luy en rendre un compte fidel. [1743]" [hereafter Navarre, "mémoire," 1743] AC, C11A, vol. 79, NAC, MG 1, microfilm, reel F-79, f. 50. Robert Navarre was the subdelegate of the intendant at Detroit. See "Burton Historical Collection Staff," "Robert Navarre," DCB, vol. IV, pp. 579-580.

²⁰For the location of the White River, see Lawrence Henry Gipson, The British Empire Before the American Revolution, volume IV, Zones of International Friction: North America South of the Great Lakes Region, 1748-1754 (New York, 1939), pp. 169n-171n.

²¹The Odawa had come from Detroit, and were described as five or six cabins, of which "la plus part ... sont de mauvais sujets qui ne s'établissent dans ce lieu que pour aller plus aisément a Chouaguen." Navarre, "mémoire," 1743, AC, C11A, vol. 79, NAC, MG 1, microfilm, reel F-79, ff. 51v-52.

²²In 1743, there were five to six hundred warriors in this community. [Navarre, "mémoire," 1743, AC, C11A, vol. 79, NAC, MG 1, microfilm, reel F-79, f. 48v; Beauharnois and Hocquart to Maurepas, 10 October, 1743, AC, C11A, vol. 79, NAC, MG 1, microfilm, reel F-79, ff. 44-44v]. This area is now the site of Cleveland, Ohio.

and persuade the residents to return to their original villages. He decided, however, that it would be better to first draw them into alliance with New France, then engage them to expel the Pennsylvanians from the White River and Ohio valley and join with the western allies in attacks on the Catawbas.²³

In the early 1740s, at the request of the Mingos²⁴ of the White River, a Canadian trader, François Saguin was sent from Detroit to establish a small outpost on the White River.²⁵ There he competed with itinerant Pennsylvania traders and the New York outpost at Oswego. Trading was brisk, since game was abundant and munitions scarce.²⁶ Saguin had been sent to the White River, on condition that the Amerindians there would expel the Pennsylvanian traders from that region.²⁷ The Mingos attempted to fulfil this commitment, and in the fall of 1742 asked the Pennsylvanians to leave and not return.²⁸ This measure proved ineffective, and the French accepted

²³Beauharnois and Hocquart to Maurepas, 14 October, 1744, AC, C11A, vol. 81, NAC, MG 1, microfilm, reel F-81, ff. 39-40v; Beauharnois to Maurepas, 7 November, 1744, AC, C11A, vol. 81, NAC, MG 1, microfilm, reel F-81, ff. 126-128.

²⁴Members of the Six Nations Iroquois living west of the Appalachians, and referred to by the French as Seneca.

²⁵Beauharnois and Hocquart to Maurepas, 10 October, 1743, AC, C11A, vol. 79, NAC, MG 1, microfilm, reel F-79, ff. 44- 44v.

²⁶Navarre, "mémoire," 1743, AC, C11A, vol. 79, NAC, MG 1, microfilm, reel F-79, f. 50v.

²⁷Beauharnois and Hocquart to Maurepas, 10 October, 1743, AC, C11A, vol. 79, NAC, MG 1, microfilm, reel F-79, f. 44v.

²⁸Navarre, "mémoire," 1743, AC, C11A, vol. 79, NAC, MG 1, microfilm, reel F-79, f. 48.

the Mingo explanation that they lacked the strength to drive out the Pennsylvanians by themselves, since "s'ils disent a l'anglois de se retirer, une autre nation luy dira de rester."²⁹

So the Anglo-Americans remained, and by 1744, their presence had become a matter of serious concern to the French. In the spring of that year, numerous American traders were reported to be "dans la résolution de faire main basse sur les traiteurs françois" and constructing magazines and warehouses.³⁰

In 1744, in response to orders from Beauharnois, who was responding to news in the spring of Pennsylvanian magazines on the Ohio, Longueuil and the commandants of Forts Miami and Ouyatanon asked the Odawas, Potawatomis, Wyandots, Miamis and Ouyatanons to attack the Anglo-Americans on the White River during the winter of 1744-1745, "pour les chasser a force ouverte de cet endroit."³¹

Among the targets of Beauharnois' attempted attacks was George Croghan an important Pennsylvania-based trader, who, in the fall of

²⁹Navarre, "Mémoire," 1743, AC, C11A, vol. 79, NAC, MG 1, microfilm, reel F-50v.

³⁰Beauharnois to Maurepas, 7 November, 1744, AC, C11A, vol. 81, NAC, MG 1, microfilm, reel F-81, f. 127. See also Beauharnois to Maurepas, 8 October, 1744, AC, C11A, vol. 81, NAC, MG 1, microfilm, reel F-81, ff. 144v-145.

³¹Beauharnois to Maurepas, 8 October, 1744, AC, C11A, vol. 81, NAC, MG 1, microfilm, reel F-81, f. 144v.

1744, travelled to the Mingo village of Cuyahoga [now Cleveland, Ohio], at the mouth of the White River. From there he not only dealt with the local Senecas, Cayugas and other White River residents, but also the Wyandots of Sandusky Bay.³² Croghan later affirmed that:

During the late war [of the Austrian Succession] all the Indian tribes living on the Ohio and the branches thereof, on this side of Lake Erie, were in strict Friendship with the English in the several provinces, and took the greatest care to preserve the friendship then subsisting between them and us. At that time we carried on a considerable branch of trade with those Indians for skins and furs, no less advantageous to them than to us. We sold them goods on much better terms than the French, which drew many Indians over the Lakes to trade with us.³³

Although in this letter, Croghan did not claim the credit for subsequent attacks by Amerindians on the French, he may have attempted at this time to incite these Amerindians to attack French traders. In 1751, John Patten, a Pennsylvanian trader from Wilmington, was captured by the French at Fort des Miamis. At the end of his interrogation in Montreal on 19 June, 1751, Patten:

ajoute que ledit Crocquen [Croghan] ... a de tout temps induit les Nations Sauvages à la destruction des François; & qu'enfin, à force de présents, il est parvenu à en faire tuer cinq dans les pays d'en haut; qu'il faisoit faire sous ses coups par des vûes d'intérêt, afin d'envahir tout le commerce, & que les François n'osassent [sic] plus traiter avec les

³²See Nicholas B. Wainwright, George Croghan: Wilderness Diplomat (Chapel Hill, 1959), pp. 6-7; Francis Jennings, Empire of Fortune: Crowns, colonies, and tribes in the Seven Years War in America (New York, 1988), pp. 27-28.

³³"M' Croghan's Transactions with the Indians previous to Hostilities on the Ohio," enclosed in George Croghan to Johnson, 14 March, 1757, NYCD, vol. VII, p. 267.

Sauvages.³⁴

In any event, Croghan and his Amerindian clientele remained undisturbed during the winter of 1744-1745. On 17 September, 1744, a party of 35 Odawas from Detroit, left "avec des demonstrations de joye telles qu'on peut les désirer"³⁵ to seek out the Pennsylvanian traders on the White River "pour les piller, détruire ou lui etre amené prisonnier."³⁶ By November, it was expected the Odawa war party would have returned, and Beauharnois predicted that in 1745 he would be reporting on the successful result of their mission, as well as the damage done to the enemy by other Amerindians during the winter of 1744-1745.³⁷ In the event the Odawas returned "sans

³⁴"Extrait de l'interrogatoire des quatre traiteurs Anglois arrêtés sur les terres de France," in Jacob-Nicolas Moreau, Mémoire contenant le Précis des Faits, avec leurs Pièces Justificative, pour servir de Réponse aux observations envoyées par les Ministres d'Angleterre dans les cours de l'Europe, (Paris, 1756), pp. 78-78. For the details of Patten's capture, see ibid., pp. 76-78 and la Jonquière to Clinton, 10 August, 1751, NYCD, X, pp. 733-734. Patten was said by the French to have "entered the fort of the Miamis to persuade the Indians who remained there, to unite with those who have fled to the Beautiful river." He was "so mutinous, and uttered so many threats, that I [la Jonquière] have been obliged to imprison him at Quebec."

³⁵Beauharnois to Maurepas, 7 November, 1744, AC, C11A, vol. 81, NAC, MG 1, microfilm, reel F-81, f. 127.

³⁶Beauharnois to Maurepas, 7 October, 1744, AC, C11A, vol. 81, NAC, MG 1, microfilm, reel F-81, ff. 126v-127. See also Beauharnois and Hocquart to Maurepas, 14 October, AC, C11A, vol. 81, NAC, MG 1, microfilm, reel F-81, ff. 39-40; "Paroles des Chefs de la Rivière Blanche, Canautchiariron et Araguindiaque a M. de Longueuil," c. 1744, AC, C11A, vol. 81, NAC, MG 1, microfilm, reel F-81, ff. 41-42.

³⁷Beauharnois to Maurepas, 7 November, 1744, AC, C11A, vol. 81, NAC, MG 1, microfilm, reel F-81, f. 127v.

rien entreprendre par les dispositions ou ils avoient trouver les Sauvages de la Rivière Blanche,"³⁸ who were reluctant to become involved in a war on behalf of the French against their Anglo-American commercial partners. Had the Odawas taken unilateral action against the Pennsylvanians, they could easily have found themselves involved in a mourning war with the Amerindians of the White River and Ohio. Already fighting in a war which met their needs for military adventure against the comfortably distant Catawbas and Chickasaws, the Odawas were apparently disinclined to begin a new cycle of mourning war simply to oblige the French.³⁹

It proved to be impossible in 1746 to send a large party to the White River, but the French remained optimistic.⁴⁰ In the fall of 1746, Beauharnois suggested that Longueuil take advantage of "des bonnes dispositions dans lesquelles ces nations sont remontent" and engage them to strike against the Pennsylvanians on the White River and Ohio valley in the winter of 1746-1747.⁴¹ The French met with more success in persuading their allies to attack the British

³⁸Beauharnois and Hocquart to Machault, 17 October, 1746, AC, C11A, vol. 85, NAC, MG 1, microfilm, reel F-85, f. 86v.

³⁹When the French were finally successful in sending a large Amerindian expedition into the Ohio in the early 1750s, they made use of Odawa from Michilimakinac, comfortably distant from the obstacles to French ambitions in the Ohio.

⁴⁰Beauharnois and Hocquart to Machault, 7 October, 1746, AC, C11A, vol. 85, NAC, MG 1, microfilm, reel F-85, f. 87v.

⁴¹"Cet objet," he wrote, "formant aujourd'huy la parti le plus intéressants de son service." [Beauharnois to Maurepas, 28 October, 1746, AC, C11A, vol. 85, NAC, MG 1, microfilm, reel F-85, f. 228v].

allies of the Catawbas in South Carolina, although the war parties that travelled there in 1744 accomplished little. Of the parties from the Detroit tribes sent to Carolina to attack the Anglo-American establishments there, most returned without striking the enemy. The warriors had lurked for five full days outside Virginia settlements, but found that the Anglo-Americans never left the safety of their homes. Only a number of horses were killed before the party was obliged to return for want of supplies. Two parties of Wyandots remained behind, to seek to penetrate to places where the settlers were less careful. Even though the attacks against the Carolinas had been ineffective, they were nonetheless considered by the French to be extremely important, in order to keep the western allies "toujours dans l'esprit de rupture avec les anglois," and to prevent the Anglo-Americans from luring them into alliance.⁴²

One goal of the French in the Ohio valley was to persuade the Shawnees to enter the French alliance system, live among the nations allied to the French, and join in attacks against the Anglo-Americans. Inconclusive negotiations had been in progress for some time when the war broke out,⁴³ but it was not until 1745 that

⁴²Beauharnois to Machault, 28 October, 1745, AC, C11A, vol. 83, NAC, MG 1, microfilm, reel F-83, ff. 104-104v.

⁴³Beauharnois to Maurepas, 24 September, 1742, AC, C11A, vol. 77, NAC, MG 1, microfilm, reel F-77, ff. 108-108v; Beauharnois to Maurepas, 11 October, 1744, AC, C11A, vol. 81, NAC, MG 1, microfilm, reel F-81, ff. 170-172v.

a band of four hundred Shawnees, led by Peter Chartier,⁴⁴ a synethnic of French and Shawnee descent, whose loyalty shifted between New France and Pennsylvania, after considerable persuasion, left their village on the Allegheny and moved to the mouth of the Scioto River. En route, they obligingly captured and robbed eight Pennsylvanian traders on the Ohio.⁴⁵ A detachment sent from Detroit to collect the prisoners secured the agreement of the Shawnees to continue on to the mouth of the Wabash, but returned with only one of the Anglo-Americans. Two more were handed over to one Poudret, who had been sent by Beauharnois in 1744 to negotiate with the Shawnees. Impatient with the progress of the band, he left with his trophy and an Odawa, who killed both prisoners 25 leagues from the Wabash.⁴⁶ This incident may have been of some importance in

⁴⁴Francis Jennings, "Peter Bisailon," in Frances G. Halpenny, Dictionary of Canadian Biography, volume III, 1741 to 1770 (Toronto, 1974), pp. 65-66; C. Hale Sipe, The Indian Wars of Pennsylvania: An Account of the Indian Events, in Pennsylvania, of the French and Indian War, Pontiac's War, Lord Dunmore's War, the Revolutionary War and the Indian Uprising from 1789 to 1795 (Harrisburg, 1929, reprinted New York, 1971), pp. 127-129.

⁴⁵Beauharnois to Maurepas, 3 November, 1746, AC, C11A, vol. 85, NAC, MG 1, microfilm, reel F-85, f. 232; Wainwright, George Croghan, pp. 7-8. Among the captives was Peter Tostee, who was trading in his own right and acting as an agent for George Croghan. This capture caused the French as much concern as satisfaction, for the Shawnees brought the traders back to their village, from where the captives might either escape from or be freed by the Shawnees, who might "même renouer alliance aux eux [the Anglo-American traders] pour tirer d'eux leurs besoins." [Beauharnois to Maurepas, 28 October, 1745, AC, C11A, vol. 83, NAC, MG 1, microfilm, reel F-83, f. 105]. See also Beauharnois to Maurepas, 3 November, 1746, AC, C11A, vol. 85, NAC, MG 1, microfilm, reel F-85, f. 232.

⁴⁶This incident led Peter Chartier to bring the remaining prisoner to Fort Chartres. Beauharnois to Maurepas, 28 October, 1745, AC, C11A, vol. 83, NAC, MG 1, microfilm, reel F-83, f. 105; Beauharnois to Maurepas, 3 November, 1746, AC, C11A, vol. 85, NAC,

following years. After the Wyandots and Iroquois of the White River struck against the French in 1747, they mentioned "a great trader from Philadelphia, which was killed two years ago by the French on his direction."⁴⁷

In the last years of the war, the French were much more preoccupied with holding their own in the Great Lakes region than in expelling the Pennsylvanians from south of Lake Erie, and French attempts to initiate offensives came quietly to an end. The expulsion of the Pennsylvanians from the Ohio valley and White River remained a high priority, but the French lacked both the manpower to form war parties, as their allies preferred not to get involved, and the matériel to equip them. Like the British at Hudson Bay, the Pennsylvania traders in the Ohio were permitted to remain at peace and take advantage of the opportunities afforded by declining French competition and the increasing fragility of the Franco-

MG 1, microfilm, reel F-85, ff. 232-232v; "Journal anonyme d'une voyage de detroit a la riviere ohio [1745]," Fernand Grenier, ed., Papiers Contrecoeur et autres documents concernant le conflit Anglo-Français sur l'Ohio de 1745 à 1745 (Quebec, 1952), pp. 1-10. Rather than settling on the Wabash, the Shawnees proceed to the Tennessee River, where they settled with Cherokees and Alibanons. Chartier assured the French that this move "ne préjudiciera pas a l'attachement de ces sauvages pour les françois." The French, however, suspected that "Il est a craindre ou qu'il n'en soit pas le maitre ou qu'il [sic] ne change luy même de sentiment." ["Journal de ce qui s'est passé," 1748, AC, C11A, vol. 87, NAC, MG 1, microfilm, reel F-87, ff. 197-197v.]

⁴⁷"Memorandum of the Cayugas, Ottowanees head of the Onondagas and Flat Nose's speech to His Excell^y on the 17 day of July 1747 at Albany," NYCD, vol. VI, p. 391.

Amerindian alliance.

Unlike the traders at the Bay the Pennsylvanians in the White River and Ohio areas occupied an area of crucial geopolitical importance to the French, as they formed the leading edge of Anglo-American westward expansion. It was here that, if New France were to fulfil its imperial purpose, the Anglo-Americans would one day have to be stopped. Unchecked by the French, the British colonials were to go from strength to strength in the area south of Lake Erie, until they became so firmly entrenched that decisive military intervention on the part of the French was required to expel them, an action which precipitated the outbreak of the Seven Years' War and the fall of New France.

2.2 Western Amerindians in the Central Theatre, 1745-1747

In 1745 French officers in the west were instructed to invite the warriors of the nations of the Lakes to take part in the war against New York and New England in the central theatre. Even as Longueuil attempted unsuccessfully to mobilize the Detroit nations against the Pennsylvanians south of the Lakes, Louis de La Corne,⁴⁸ a veteran officer of the Canadian garrison, at Michilimakinac extended an invitation to the Odawas and Ojibwas who lived near that post to go to the central zone. Sixty warriors traveled to

⁴⁸C.J. Russ, "Louis de La Corne," in Frances G. Halpenny, ed., Dictionary of Canadian Biography, volume III, 1741 to 1770 (Toronto, 1974), pp. 331-332

Montreal.⁴⁹

Once there, they joined with contingents from other Western tribes in taking part in preparations for the defence of Canada against an apprehended invasion from New York. When news arrived of the fall of Louisbourg, Beauharnois called a meeting of the Iroquois, western, and Laurentian Amerindians. According to Canasetego of the Iroquois:

Speaking to Us all, he [Beauharnois] desired such who loved him to go with him and assist him in defending Quebec; and that those who went with him need not take anything with them save their Tobacco pouches; that he would provide Guns, Pistols, Swords, Ammunition, Provisions, and every thing, even Paint to paint them; and thereupon delivered the belt to the interpreter, who threw it at the feet of the Indians present, some of whom inconsiderately and without any consultation first took it up and danced the war dance; and afterwards divers of the Indians present, chiefly of the Praying [nominally Christian] Indians, went with the French governor to Quebec, where they staid [sic] eight or ten days; but no notice was taken of them, nor any arms or necessaries so much as a knife provided for them; nor were they admitted to speak to the governor, which so exasperated the Praying Indians that they left Quebec and are since gone against their common Enemies to the Southward."⁵⁰

In any event, 450 Amerindians travelled with Beauharnois to Quebec, where they remained until the end of August.⁵¹

⁴⁹Beauharnois to Machault, 28 October, 1745, AC, C11A, vol. 83, NAC, MG 1, microfilm, reel F-83, f. 104v.

⁵⁰"An account of the treaty held at the city of Albany in the Province of New York, but his Excellency the Governor of that Province, and the Honourable the Commissioners for the Provinces of Massachusetts, Connecticut, and Pennsylvania, with the Indians of the Six Nations, in October, 1745," Minutes of the Provincial Council of Pennsylvania, vol. V, pp. 23-24.

⁵¹Beauharnois to Maurepas, 28 October, 1745, AC, C11A, vol. 83, NAC, MG 1, microfilm, reel F-83, f. 103.

In 1746, at least 349 Illinois, Menominees, Mississaugas, Odawas, Ojibwas, Potawatomis, Winnebagos, and Wyandots participated in operations along the Lake Champlain corridor.⁵² At the end of the campaigning season, Beauharnois was confident that his allies would return in force in the coming year:

La disposition ou sons les sauvages des pays d'en haut de descendre à Montreal au printemps prochain joins a la manière dans il se sont comportés cette année ne me donnent aucun doute qu'ils n'effectuens la promesse qu'il m'ons faite a cet égard es même qu'ils ménagerons d'autres nations a les suivre.⁵³

On 18 January, 1747, Beauharnois entrusted Luc de La Corne,⁵⁴ an officer with extensive experience as a trader in the Great Lakes region, with the leadership of a delegation composed of two other officers, François-Josué la Corne Dubreuil,⁵⁵ and François-Marie Picoté de Belestre,⁵⁶ and twenty-six Amerindians, who were the

⁵²There were 16 Menominee, 14 Kiscakous of Detroit, 64 Potawatomi, 15 Winnebagos, 10 Illinois, 50 Ottawa from Michilimakinac, 40 Ottawa of la fourche, 65 Mississauga from the head of Lake Ontario, 14 Ojibwa, 37 Ottawa from Detroit, and 24 Wyandot. "Extrait des différens mouvements qui se sont faites à Montréal à l'occasion de la guerre depuis le mois de Décembre 1745 jusques au mois d'Aoust 1746," AC, C11A, vol. 86, NAC, MG 1, microfilm, reel F-86, ff. 305v-306.

⁵³Beauharnois to Maurepas, 1 October, 1746, AC, C11A, vol. 85, NAC, MG 1, microfilm, reel F-85, f. 198.

⁵⁴Pierre Tousignant, Madeleine Dionne-Tousignant, "Luc de La Corne," in Frances G. Halpenny, ed., Dictionary of Canadian Biography, volume IV, 1771 to 1800 (Toronto, 1979), pp. 425-429.

⁵⁵C.J. Russ, "François-Josué La Corne Dubreuil," in Frances G. Halpenny, ed., Dictionary of Canadian Biography, volume III, 1741 to 1770 (Toronto, 1974), p. 333.

⁵⁶Pierre Tousignant, Madeleine Dionne-Tousignant, "François-Marie Picoté de Belestre," in Frances G. Halpenny, ed., Dictionary of Canadian Biography, volume IV, 1771 to 1800 (Toronto, 1979), pp. 633-636.

principal chiefs of the Laurentian Amerindians.⁵⁷ They were to travel to each of the nations of the Great Lakes region, and invite them to descend to Montreal in the spring, to join the French in defending Canada, should the British attempt an invasion.⁵⁸

La Corne and his delegation travelled overland on snowshoes to Detroit.⁵⁹ There, they met the Detroit tribes, and left Belestre to accompany a delegation of Detroit Amerindians to Montreal, then proceeded on to Michilimakinac. By 6 May, La Corne was able to report that:

...toutes les nations chez lesquelles il a passé, se sont présentées de bonne volonté, et avec plaisir pour descendre a Montreal et qu'il n'a trouvé aucun obstacle dans sa mission dans laquelle il a mieux réussi qu'il n'osoit se flatter.⁶⁰

In the meantime, as the result of the active participation of the Mohawk on the side of New York, Beauharnois decided that it was no longer possible to delay a formal declaration of war upon that nation. On 8 March, 1747, prior to the descent of the delegations from Detroit and Michilimakinac, those Potawatomis, Odawas,

⁵⁷Lacorne to Maurepas, 1 October, 1747, AC, C11A, vol. 89, NAC, MG 1, microfilm, reel F-89, f. 235v.

⁵⁸Extrait en forme de journal, de ce qui s'est passé d'Intéressant dans la Colonie a l'occasion des mouvements de guerre et des différens avis reçus depuis le départ des vaisseaux, au mois de novembre 1746, [hereafter "Extrait en forme de journal, 1747,"] AC, C11A, vol. 87, NAC, MG 1, microfilm, reel F-87, ff. 23v-24.

⁵⁹Lacorne to Maurepas, 1 October, 1747, AC, C11A, vol. 89, NAC, MG 1, microfilm, reel F-89, f. 235v.

⁶⁰"Extrait en forme de journal," 1746, AC, C11A, vol. 87, NAC, MG 1, microfilm, reel F-87, f. 62v.

Winnebagos, Sauks, Illinois and Wyandots warriors who had wintered in Montreal joined with the French and their Laurentian allies in declaring war on the Mohawks, then formed eight or ten war parties which raided New York and New England.⁶¹

Lacorne returned to Montreal on 6 July, 1746, accompanied by one hundred and ninety-two Amerindians from Michilimakinac, St. Joseph River and La Baye, of whom about eighty were women and children.⁶² By 15 July, they had met with the Governor of Montreal, then left with Lacorne for the Lake Champlain frontier.⁶³ On 24 July, Belestre arrived at Quebec with eight Odawa chiefs, four Wyandots from Detroit, including Sastaredzy, "premier chef," and Tayachatin, and two Senecas.⁶⁴ Two hundred and fifty warriors from the western nations who had wintered in Montreal or travelled there with Lacorne raided along the New York frontier, and returned with prisoners and English and Mohawk scalps.⁶⁵

⁶¹"Extrait en forme de journal, 1747," AC, C11A, vol. 87, NAC, MG 1, microfilm, reel F-87, ff. 25v-26. Also present were delegates from the Abenakis, Nipissings, Algonquins, Kahnawake and Kanesatake of the Laurentian valley.

⁶²"Extrait en forme de journal, 1747," AC, C11A, vol. 87, NAC, MG 1, microfilm, reel F-87, f. 70v; Lacorne to Maurepas, 1 October, 1747, AC, C11A, vol. 89, NAC, MG 1, microfilm, reel F-89, f. 236.

⁶³"Extrait en forme de journal, 1747," AC, C11A, vol. 87, NAC, MG 1, microfilm, reel F-87, f. 73v.

⁶⁴"Extrait en forme de journal, 1747," AC, C11A, vol. 87, NAC, MG 1, microfilm, reel F-87, ff. 75, 77.

⁶⁵Lacorne to Maurepas, 1 October, 1747, AC, C11A, vol. 89, NAC, MG 1, microfilm, reel F-89, f. 236; "Extrait en forme de journal, 1747," AC, C11A, vol. 87, NAC, MG 1, microfilm, reel F-87, f. 73v.

2.3 Franco-Amerindian trade, 1744-1746

In spite of their failure to induce their allies to make war upon Pennsylvanian traders on the White River, the willingness of some of the Amerindians of the Lakes to take part in operations in the central theatre might have led the French to view the situation in the west with considerable equanimity. This would have been a mistake. Trade was the bond that held the western alliance together, and, in 1744, the western trade was in trouble. Between 1744 and 1746, the alliance remained intact, but increasingly under strain.

The disruption of the western fur trade had begun in the fall of 1743. François Chalet, the agent in Canada of the Compagnie des Indes and leaseholder of the trade of the Lake Ontario posts, maintained two vessels on the lake. In the course of its last voyage of the year, one of these vessels was wrecked while carrying trade goods to Fort Niagara. The lateness of the season precluded salvage operations until spring, when the vessel was found to be damaged beyond repair. Four carpenters were sent to Fort Frontenac in 1744 to build a replacement, but in the meantime, trade at Fort Niagara ground to a halt. The loss of the cargo interrupted the winter trade at that post, as it produced an interval early in 1744 in which there were no trade goods at Fort Niagara. Chalet's frustrated clientele promptly took their business to Oswego, only

to find the New York traders gone, and the outpost bare of goods. Finally, they travelled to Detroit, and there at last exchanged their pelts.⁶⁶

This might have remained a minor problem had it not been for the outbreak of war. Captures of ships by privateers, together with increased demand for arms and munitions for military operations, led to pronounced shortages of goods in the central colony, which sharply curtailed those available for the western fur trade. Amerindian customers at Frontenac and Niagara found that the goods that they sought were no longer available.⁶⁷ As a result of scarcity and soaring wartime freight and insurance rates, the price of French goods for merchants had climbed sharply and they instructed their clerks in the west to pass the increase on to Amerindian consumers. Chalet reported that prices of goods in the west had risen to about twenty-five percent above normal.⁶⁸

Members of the western allies who traded with the French were

⁶⁶Beauharnois and Hocquart to Maurepas, 25 October, 1744, AC, C11A, vol. 81, NAC, MG 1, microfilm, reel F-81, ff. 72v-73; Hocquart to Maurepas, 23 October, 1744, AC, C11A, vol. 81, NAC, MG 1, microfilm, reel F-81, ff. 406-407.

⁶⁷Beauharnois to Maurepas, 9 October, 1744, AC, C11A, vol. 81, NAC, MG 1, microfilm, reel F-81, ff. 163-164.

⁶⁸These prices were sixty percent above the price of goods in France, and forty percent above the ordinary price in Quebec. Hocquart to the Controller General, 16 October, 1744, AC, C11A, vol. 81, NAC, MG 1, microfilm, reel F-81, ff. 350-350v; Beauharnois and Hocquart to Maurepas, 15 October, 1744, AC, C11A, vol. 81, NAC, MG 1, microfilm, reel F-81, f. 44.

accustomed to receive a certain quantity of goods in exchange for their pelts, and were not pleased when they were offered only a fraction of the goods that they had expected. They were, in fact, outraged and responded by threatening to take their custom to the New York, where they could count on better terms.⁶⁹ Nor were they slow to make good on this threat. Very quickly, reports were received from the commandants of Forts Frontenac and Niagara of large number of canoes that come to trade, but found merchandise scarce and prices unsatisfactory, and continued on to Oswego. Amerindian traders passing through Niagara carried six hundred packs of beaver to Oswego. There, goods were not only available but attractively priced.⁷⁰

⁶⁹Beauharnois and Hocquart to Maurepas, 15 October, 1744, AC, C11A, vol. 81, NAC, MG 1, microfilm, reel F-81, f. 350v. See also Hocquart to the Controller General, 16 October, 1744, C11A, 81, pp. 449-455. For Amerindian attitudes towards price fluctuations in general, see Arthur J. Ray, Indians in the Fur Trade: their role as hunters, trappers and middlemen in the lands southwest of Hudson Bay, 1660-1870 (Toronto, 1974), pp. 62-63.

⁷⁰Beauharnois to Maurepas, 9 October, 1744, AC, C11A, vol. 81, NAC, MG 1, microfilm, reel F-81, f. 163v. Another group which found its interests threatened by the new terms of trade, and whose hostility could be equally dangerous, was the garrisons of the western posts. The price increases, warned Céloron, the commandant of Niagara, would "alloit perdre et s'aliener [sic] tous les sauvages et meme toute la garnison." [Hocquart to Maurepas, 23 October, 1744, AC, C11A, vol. 81, NAC, MG 1, microfilm, reel F-81, f. 409]. His own garrison at Niagara was particularly restive, and Céloron reported that "si les choses restoient sur ce pied s'il contiendroit difficilement la garnison." [Beauharnois and Hocquart to Maurepas, 25 October, 1744, AC, C11A, vol. 81, NAC, MG 1, microfilm, reel F-81, f. 74]. Were they to be driven to mutiny, like the soldiers of Louisbourg during the following winter, and the British attempted an attack, or the Amerindians turned hostile, the consequences could be extremely serious. Discontent among the troupes de la marine in the west is not mentioned again, so presumably the situation was resolved amicably.

Gilles Hocquart,⁷¹ the Intendant of New France, felt that tensions could be eased, were the commandants of the posts to explain economic realities to the disgruntled Amerindians:

Il luy auroit esté aisé d'expliquer tant aux sauvages qu'aux françois que les prix des marchandises ayant considerablement augmenté il ne seroit pas possible que le fermier put les leur fournir sur le même pied qu'auparavant que les circonstances pourroient changer.⁷²

More seriously, he recommended that the quantity of goods handed over in exchange for a beaver pelt [the price paid per pelt by the Compagnie des Indes] be increased proportionately to the increase in the price of fur trade goods until the end of the war, when all prices would revert to normal.

Hocquart predicted that the Amerindians would be willing to buy more expensive goods, providing that in exchange the beaver pelt was revalued at a higher price. Under these conditions, although the volume of the trade would decrease, together with the absolute quantity of goods received by the Amerindians, the allies would at least receive the accustomed quantity of goods per pelt. Moreover, this measure would bring Canadian prices into line with those paid by the Anglo-Americans, which would lessen the danger of the British profiting from French difficulties. The prices paid at the

⁷¹Donald J. Horton, "Gilles Hocquart," in Frances G. Halpenny, ed., Dictionary of Canadian Biography, volume IV, 1771 to 1800 (Toronto, 1979), pp. 354-365.

⁷²Hocquart to Maurepas, 23 October, 1744, AC, C11A, vol. 81, NAC, MG 1, microfilm, reel P-81, f. 409. Amerindian reactions to homilies of this nature are not recorded, but judging from their subsequent actions, they do not appear to have been impressed by explanations couched in terms of abstract economic forces.

posts would stabilize, and Amerindian customers would have one fewer grievance. The Compagnie des Indes, he suggested, could compensate by increasing the price of beaver sold in France. When the war ended, prices paid for pelts would fall, but this would be balanced by a fall in the price of trade goods.⁷³ Beauharnois and Hocquart hoped that his measure would neutralize any New York attempt to take advantage of French difficulties to attract the Western Amerindians to Oswego, and halt or at least limit the hemorrhage of pelts from Niagara to Oswego as Amerindians traders sought better terms of trade.⁷⁴

This was a sound proposition, as far as it went, but it did not address the major problem, the absolute shortage of trade goods for the west. Amerindian demand for goods tended to remain stable regardless of changes in prices,⁷⁵ and by the mid-eighteenth century, going without trade goods, especially ammunition, would mean enduring an economic crisis. Moreover, Hocquart's scheme could not be put into effect without consultation with the Compagnie des Indes and the minister. Hocquart could improve the terms of trade, which might have a positive effect: he could not conjure goods out

⁷³Beauharnois and Hocquart to Machault, 15 October, 1744, AC, C11A, vol. 81, NAC, MG 1, microfilm, reel F-81, ff. 45v-48; Hocquart to the Controller General, 16 October, 1744, AC, C11A, vol. 81, NAC, MG 1, microfilm, reel F-81, ff. 352-352v.

⁷⁴Beauharnois and Hocquart to Machault, 25 October, 1744, AC, C11A, vol. 81, NAC, MG 1, microfilm, reel F-81, ff. 72-76.

⁷⁵Arthur J. Ray, Donald Freeman, 'Give Us Good Measure': an economic analysis of relations between the Indians and the Hudson's Bay Company before 1763 (Toronto, 1978), pp. 222-223.

of thin air.

After careful consideration, the Compagnie des Indes agreed in 1745 to accept Hocquart's proposed scale of prices for the duration of the war.⁷⁶ The minister agreed, and expressed the hope that the increase in the price of beaver should decrease the inconvenience experienced by French traders as a result of the war.⁷⁷ Not until June of 1746 was an ordonnance issued which set new and much higher prices for fur for the duration of the war. The price paid for castor gras d'hiver increased from two livres, fifteen sols to four livres; that of Castor sec d'hiver, from two livres, fifteen sols to three livres fifteen sols. Other furs, for which one livre worth of goods had been exchanged, were now valued at one livre ten sols.⁷⁸ However, it was expected that most voyageurs and traders would not hear of the new ordonnance during the trading season, so it would not begin to affect relations with the western Amerindians

⁷⁶Compagnie des Indes to Hocquart, 1 May, 1745, AC, C11A, vol. 83, NAC, MG 1, microfilm, reel F-83, ff. 161-163.

⁷⁷Maurepas to de la Ronde, 12 May, 1745, AC, B, vol. 80, AC, NAC, MG 1, microfilm, reel F-284, ff. 65-65v.

⁷⁸The increased prices were "pour empescher et prévenir autant qu'il est possible les liaisons des sauvages avec les anglois et les détourner de leur porter le Castor de leur chasse que pour mettre les Negociants, Equippeurs Traitteurs et fermiers des posts en estat de soutenir leur commerce a peu pres sur le même pied qu'avant la guerre." ["Ordonnance de Mm. de Beauharnois et hocquart, Gouverneur Général et intendant de la nouvelle france qui ordonne une augmentation sur le prix de castor," 6 June, 1746, AC, C11A, vol. 85, NAC, MG 1, microfilm, reel F-85, f. 3-4v]. See also Beauharnois and Hocquart to Maurepas, 18 September, 1746, AC, C11A, vol. 85, NAC, MG 1, microfilm, reel F-85, ff. 7-7v; Hocquart to Maurepas, 24 October, 1746, AC, C11A, vol. 85, NAC, MG 1, microfilm, reel F-85, f. 382.

until 1747.⁷⁹

In 1745, trade goods were scarcer than ever. In order to provide for the defence of the colony, agents of the intendant had stripped the warehouses of the fur merchants bare, and left virtually nothing for the fur trade. There was not a single piece of ecarlatine in the warehouses of the Compagnie des Indes.⁸⁰ Although the forts at Niagara and Frontenac were well supplied with rations for the garrisons, few trade goods were available. With the colony threatened with invasion, munitions were needed for defence, and could not be spared for the fur trade.⁸¹

Caught between the refusal of the Indians to pay higher prices and the soaring cost and scarcity of trade goods, merchants experienced extreme difficulty in supplying their posts and ceased to find the fur trade profitable. François Chalet, the farmer of the Lake Ontario posts, gave the one year's notice required by his contract. Hocquart found that the farmers who had leases at the posts wished

⁷⁹Chalet to Compagnie des Indes, 24 August, 1746, in Hocquart to Maurepas, 24 October, 1746, AC, C11A, vol. 85, NAC, MG 1, microfilm, reel F-85, f. 384v.

⁸⁰The French believed that "il est impossible que le commerce des Pays d'Enhaut se soutienne sans cet etoffe." [Beauharnois and Hocquart to Maurepas, 23 October, 1745, AC, C11A, vol. 83, NAC, MG 1, microfilm, reel F-83, ff. 42-46v].

⁸¹Beauharnois and Hocquart to Maurepas, 23 October, 1745, AC, C11A, vol. 83, NAC, MG 1, microfilm, reel F-83, ff. 42-46v; Beauharnois and Hocquart to Maurepas, 19 June, 1745, AC, C11A, vol. 83, NAC, MG 1, microfilm, reel F-83, ff. 92-92v.

to be released from their contracts, others were not interested in buying congés. Even though Beauharnois was willing to waive the usual charges, in order to encourage merchants to trade, only ten canoes went to Detroit, seven of which were free, in order to transports 11,400 pounds of supplies for the garrison. Only nine congés, many fewer than usual, were sold for Michilimakinac, and the situation was the same for Forts Frontenac and Niagara, and the other posts.⁸²

The scarcity of goods and high prices were such that trade sharply declined, and:

....l'on pouroit même regarde totalment perdu l'année prochaine [the western fur trade], si nos vaisseaux n'arrivent pas ... Il y a lieu de craindre que des cette année le peu de marchandises qui est monté tant a Niagara que dans les autres postes, ne dégoute les sauvages et ne les engage a se ranger du côté des Anglois pour y trouver leurs besoins.⁸³

In June, Hocquart had warned that the scarcity of goods for the fur trade could cause the western fur trade to collapse completely and enable the British to attract both Laurentian and western Amerindians, leaving the French without allies.⁸⁴

⁸²Beauharnois to Maurepas, 28 Oct, 1745, AC, C11A, vol. 83, NAC, MG 1, microfilm, reel F-83, ff. 105-107v; Beauharnois to Maurepas, 19 June, 1745, AC, C11A, vol. 83, NAC, MG 1, microfilm, reel F-83, ff. 92-92v; Hocquart to Maurepas, 8 October, 1745, AC, C11A, vol. 83, NAC, MG 1, microfilm, reel F-83, ff. 258v-259.

⁸³Beauharnois to Maurepas, 19 June, 1745, AC, C11A, vol. 83, NAC, MG 1, microfilm, reel F-83, ff. 92-92v. See also Hocquart to Maurepas, 21 June, 1745, AC, C11A, vol. 83, NAC, MG 1, microfilm, reel F-83, ff. 172-172v.

⁸⁴Hocquart to Maurepas, 21 June, 1745, AC, C11A, vol. 83, NAC, MG 1, microfilm, reel F-83, ff. 172-172v.

The late arrival of the ships from La Rochelle in the spring of 1746 meant that Canada was entirely bereft of trade goods for the western posts.⁸⁵ Supplies were so short that Quebec merchants found that when dry goods were offered for sale, "on na pas le temps de déballer en aparence que quebec consommera tout."⁸⁶

Under the stress of war, the infrastructure of the fur trade was slowly breaking down, as merchant after merchant found himself unable to continue to trade in the West under peacetime terms. Congés were given free of charge for Detroit and Michilimakinac, and the rent for the leased posts like Ouyatanon was decreased or eliminated, "pour entretenir les sauvages de ce poste jusqu'a ce que les temps changent." Other farmers began to inquire about similar arrangements.⁸⁷ Hocquart needed a farmer for the Lake Ontario posts, but expected that he would have to manage them

⁸⁵Beauharnois to Maurepas, 3 November, 1746, AC, C11A, vol. 85, NAC, MG 1, microfilm, reel F-85, ff. 230-230v.

⁸⁶Havy & Lefebvre to Guy Baby, 24 November, 1746, MG 24, L3, Baby Collection, vol. 1, Correspondence, 1745-1749, pp. 952.

⁸⁷It was no longer possible to charge for congés for Detroit. The price of the twelve permits was remitted in exchange for transport of crown stores. Five free congés were issued for Makinac. The farmer of Michipicoten, whose lease had expired, agreed to send a canoe to that post after the rent was dropped from 3750 to 1000 livres. The lessee of La Baye was unable to continue due to lack of goods, but la Corne was able to find two individuals from Michilimakinac to trade there, for a fee of one thousand livres each. At Ouyatanon, the same farmer was allowed to remain in place for another year without charge, "pour entretenir les sauvages de ce poste jusqu'a ce que les temps changer." [Beauharnois and Hocquart to Maurepas, 18 September, 1746, AC, C11A, vol. 85, NAC, MG 1, microfilm, reel F-85, ff. 16v-19].

himself.⁸⁸ Goods were in such short supply during the summer, that Hocquart provided powder and munitions from Crown magazines to the farmers to send to the western posts to allow trade to continue until the arrival of ships from la Rochelle.⁸⁹

Rather shortsightedly, some traders attempted to compensate for fewer goods and higher prices by imposing their will upon their Amerindian trading partners, with the result that the Wyandot and other Great Lakes tribes found themselves "much imposed on at Niagara, having been stopt there this spring by their artifice, & obliged to pay twenty beavers for a stroud blanket besides several other impositions."⁹⁰ The Mississauga considered that:

We have hitherto been kept like Prisoners on the other side of the Lake, Onontio our Father told us that if we should treat with the English he woul'd look upon it as a breach of the Peace with him; now we come to let you know that we will no more be stop'd from treating with your Brethren, the English; We will join with you to support the House of Oswego where the goods that the Indians want are so plenty ... [Onontio's] goods are very dear, and he is turned malicious because he sees our women & children clothed fine in English Cloaths bought at Oswego.⁹¹

⁸⁸Chalet's lease expired in September, 1746. [Beauharnois and Hocquart to Maurepas, 8 November, 1746, AC, C11A, vol. 85, NAC, MG 1, microfilm, reel F-85, f. 175].

⁸⁹Hocquart to Maurepas, 18 September, 1746, AC, C11A, vol. 85, NAC, MG 1, microfilm, reel F-85, f. 311.

⁹⁰Johnson to Clinton, 4 August, 1747, James Sullivan, ed., The Papers of Sir William Johnson, vol. I (Albany, 1921) [hereafter Johnson Papers], p. 17. This information came from Ottrawana, a leading Cayuga.

⁹¹Conrad Weiser, "Memorandum of the Message deliver'd to the Indians of Shamokin at the House of Joseph Chambers, in Paxton, by the Subscriber," Minutes of the Provincial Council of Pennsylvania,

It was against this background of a collapsing fur trade, upon which the western allies were dependent, that both French and British attempted to enlist the support of these Amerindians in the war. As the French fur trade collapsed upon itself, the prospects for continued amicable Franco-Amerindian relations steadily darkened.

2.4 Amerindian contacts with the British, 1744-1747

It was not until 1745 that the colonial government of New York began to attempt to lure the Western allies away from the French alliance. New York traders had long been in direct contact with the western tribes at Oswego, and in the course of the war entered into indirect contact by way of the Iroquois. This began as the result of efforts first to attract the trade of the western nations, then to gain their support for a planned invasion of Canada, rather than an attempt to incite the western tribes to drive the French from the west.

In July of 1745, the commandant of Oswego held a meeting of the Amerindians who had gathered at his post, many of whom belonged to nations which were allied to the French, for a conference. He presented them with a large barrel of rum for each village, which was accepted, together with gifts of cloth and porcelain. The assembled Amerindians were informed that a British fleet was at sea

vol. V, 9 July, 1747, pp. 85, 85n.

en route to invade Canada, that the French had nothing left to give the Amerindians, and that the British were the only possible source of trade goods for them.

A party of Wyandots who attended this conference spread this news among the tribes of the Detroit area. Their reports "a fait un si grand effet dans les villages de ce poste qu'ils ne cessent partir [for Oswego] sans rien dire." Longueuil, the commandant, remonstrated with the chiefs, and declared that "cette conduite estoit absolument contraire à nos volontés." The chiefs replied that they could not refuse the New York gifts, and voiced their discontent with the high prices charged for trade goods at Niagara.⁹²

In August, 1746, New York secured the agreement of the Iroquois to take part in an invasion of New France by way of Lake Champlain.⁹³ Present at this meeting in Albany were representatives of at least one nation allied to the French. Representatives of the Mississaugas joined with an Iroquois embassy, who spoke for the westerners and informed the New Yorkers that "we take in the Messissagas for the Seventh Nation." They described their allies as:

⁹² Longueuil to Beauharnois, 28 July, 1745, AC, C11A, vol. 83, NAC, MG 1, microfilm, reel F-83, ff. 61-61v.

⁹³R. Siebarth, "The Role of New York in King George's War, 1739-1748," (Ph.D. dissertation, New York University, 1972), pp. 144-145.

...a nation called the Messissagas whose delegates are here present. They consist of five castles containing eight hundred men who are all determined and do agree to join us in this common cause against our enemies the french & their indians.⁴⁴

They too accepted the formal invitation from the governors of New York and Massachusetts Bay to join with the New Yorkers in their projected invasion of Canada.

In the spring of 1747, a Mississauga delegation came to Oswego, "with a Message from their whole Nation, joined by the rest of the Indians about the Lakes of Canada, to the Six United Nations." They noted their grievances regarding French attempts to dissuade them from trading at Oswego, then stated that:

...now we come to let you know that we will no more be stop'd from treating with your Brethren, the English; We will join with you to support the House of Oswego where the goods that the Indians want are so plenty. All the Indians about the Lakes will join, and if need take up the hatchet against our foolish father Onontio whenever you require it.⁴⁵

Later in the year, word reached Albany that a meeting was to be held during the winter at Onondaga "of some of the far nations ...

⁴⁴"Answer of the Six Nations to his Excellency the Honourable George Clinton Captain General and Governor in Chief in and over the Province of New York & &ca and to the Commissioners of the Massachusetts Bay the 23 Augt. 1746," ["The Letters and Papers of Caldwellader Colden, volume III, 1743-1747." Collections of the New-York Historical Society for the Year 1919, vol. 52, pp. 255, 256].

⁴⁵Conrad Weiser, "Memcrandum of the Message deliver'd to the Indians of Shamokin at the House of Joseph Chambers, in Paxton, by the Subscriber," Minutes of the Provincial Council of Pennsylvania, vol. V, 9 July, 1747, pp. 85, 85n. Weiser adds that "The Six nations have received messages from other nations to the same purport, all promising to engage in favour of the Six Nations, and the House of Oswego."

in Order to Concert measures touching their joining the Five Nations of Indians in the War against Canada."⁶⁶ William Johnson was ordered to attend, to represent New York interests with "several Indian Nations ... some of which were lately in alliance with the French."⁶⁷

In spite of these encouraging words from the Mississaugas, Wyandots, and other "Far Nations," New York ambitions in the west remained, as opposed to the Acadian and central theatres, limited to attracting their trade. In May of 1747, Johnson proposed:

...to send a man of good interest who understands the language well, to Oswego, with a cargo first about £ 500 of such necessarys as I now mention for the use of the foreign Indians, who pass by Oswego for want of such a man there to talk with them & encourage them, & go to the French."⁶⁸

2.5 Conclusion

During the first three years of the War of the Austrian Succession, the French attempted to mobilize their allies in the west to act on their behalf in the Ohio country, the Hudson Bay area, and the central theatre. They succeeded only in attracting Amerindians to

⁶⁶George Clinton to Johnson, 2 Dec., 1746, Johnson Papers, vol. I, pp. 67-68. W.O. Mishoff, "The Indian Policy of Sir William Johnson," (Ph. D. dissertation, State University of Iowa, 1933), p. 18, asserts that Johnson "went to Onondaga and held private conferences with leading sachems and warriors on behalf of the British interest," but cites only Clinton's orders of 2 December.

⁶⁷Clinton to Newcastle, 9 December, 1746, NYCD, vol. VI p. 314.

⁶⁸Johnson to Clinton, 7 May, 1747, NYCD, vol. VI, p. 361.

fight alongside them in the central theatre.

Beauharnois had planned to exploit the manpower provided by the Franco-Amerindian alliance to fulfil French objectives in the west. He intended to bend the western allies to his will by manipulating them into involvement in a mourning war. "Le grand article," he wrote:

étoit de les mettre en mouvement, ils y sont aujourd'huy, et pour peu qu'ils fassent quelques pertes avec les anglois il sera plus difficile de les arrêter, si les circonstances de la paix avec nous le demandoient."

The Amerindians, however, remained aloof.

The French were able to mobilize an effective Amerindian force, but only if it were directed against a target that was acceptable to their allies. The French were the allies, not the masters, of their Amerindian partners, and issued invitations, not orders. Amerindian acceptance depended upon whether or not the proposed French course of action accorded with their interests and inclinations. Varying Amerindian responses to these invitations were manifested in the striking contrast between the small and ineffective war parties that ventured towards the White River and the large, belligerent contingents that served in the central theatre.

For the western Amerindians, the British in the settlements of New York and New England were an ideal enemy. They themselves had no particular quarrel with the Anglo-Americans. Warfare was a cultural

⁴⁰Beauharnois to Maurepas, 7 November, 1744, AC, C11A, vol. 81, NAC, MG 1, microfilm, reel F-81, f. 128.

necessity for adult males, and the economic costs of participation in war with the French were borne by the French, who supplied war parties with arms, equipment, and provisions, rather than themselves. Moreover, unlike the Catawbas and Dakotas, they could be reasonably certain that the New Yorkers and New Englanders would not retaliate. Not only were these colonies comfortably distant from the Pays d'en haut, but moreover the New Yorkers themselves sought the custom and alliance, not the enmity, of the nations of the Great Lakes.

With hindsight, the French offensive strategy in the west proved to be counter-productive. Just when the decline of the fur trade began gently to undercut the commercial foundations of the alliance, the French attempted to impose an unwanted war against Pennsylvanian traders south of Lake Erie upon their allies. By inviting their allies to fight in the White River, the French created a situation where French and Amerindian diverged. Amerindians wanted peace with their immediate neighbors; the French wanted them to attack Anglo-American traders, which might have brought the allies into conflict with the trading partners of the Pennsylvanians. Moreover, many Amerindians from the Detroit area traded with the Pennsylvanians in the west or New Yorkers at Oswego, and had no particular quarrel with them.¹⁰⁰ These efforts accomplished virtually nothing, but may have created antagonisms among some of these allies, thereby

¹⁰⁰It is important to note that the Amerindians of Detroit who resisted becoming involved in war along the White River included individuals like Pontiac, who were strongly pro-French.

weakening an important bond, at a time when the Anglo-Americans were beginning to exploit more fully the opportunities afforded by trade at Oswego.

The expulsion of the Pennsylvanians from the White River was an important component of French imperial policy, but attempting to achieve it in the 1740s diverted resources away from the defence of Canada, at a time when the French position in the west was becoming increasingly precarious. The killings of Pennsylvanian traders on the Wabash had angered the Wyandots, while heavy-handed attempts to forbid the western Amerindians from trading with the New Yorkers at Oswego and irregular trading practices alienated the Mississauga and other nations.

Most important, however, was the plain fact that the trade goods that the Amerindians most wanted, were the arms and munitions that the French were now least able to supply. Such items, as well as other goods needed by the allies, were simply not available. This dearth, warned Beauharnois in 1745, "peut opérer en grand changement de la part des sauvages à notre égard." For in spite of the:

...attachement qu'ils ayant pour les François il n'est pas possible que je puisse me flatter de les y maintenir lorsque les Postes seront denués de tout ce qui leur est nécessaire, comme j'envisage qu'ils seront presque entièrement l'année prochaine.

The Governor-General considered that a major effort would be needed to prevent the Amerindians from breaking with the French,

abandoning the western posts and beginning to align with the British.¹⁰¹

Beauharnois was, if anything, optimistic. For the French were not the only Euramerican group attempting to mobilize the Amerindians of the west. George Croghan, and possibly other Pennsylvania traders, had been attempting to persuade their Amerindian trading partners to attack the French. Confronted with very similar offers made by Frenchmen and the Pennsylvanians, the Amerindians of Detroit and those of the area south of Lake Erie responded quite differently. Both the French and the Pennsylvanians had attempted to influence Amerindian behavior, but it was the decisions of Amerindians made in response to these requests and to their perception of their particular interests that determined the subsequent course of events. The degree to which each factor governed their decisions is impossible to determine, but in 1747, a faction among the Amerindians of the west began to strike against the French.

Even as the governor-general met with the contingents of warriors from the west which had travelled to Montreal to fight on the New

¹⁰¹Beauharnois to Maurepas, 28 October, 1745, AC, C11A, vol. 83, NAC, MG 1, microfilm, reel F-83, ff. 106v-107.

York frontier the following report was being read by officials in that colony:

By all accounts, the French to the westward of Oswego, are in a miserable condition, being hemmed in on every side by the Chenonddeys [Wyandot] and Ottawees [Odawa], who cut off all communication between them and Canada, and have sent word that they are ready at a call of the Five Nations to come and join them. They also say they intend to destroy Niagara...¹⁰²

¹⁰²Johnson to Clinton, 17 July, 1747, NYCD, vol. VI, p. 386. News of the attacks reached Albany by war of Oswego. [John H. Lydius to Johnson, 16 June, 1747, Johnson Papers, vol. I, p. 100].

CHAPTER 3:
WAR IN THE GREAT LAKES REGION AND
THREE FIRES PARTICIPATION AND NEUTRALITY, 1747

3.1 The beginning of Franco-Amerindian hostilities in the west
On 2 May, 1747, while returning to Iroquoia from the Wyandot village of Etionnontout on Sandusky Bay, an Iroquois encountered a party of warriors at a place called Kichaga, on the south shore of Lake Erie. They proved to be men of the Wyandot and "a part of y^e Six Nations Ingans, That has there Dwelling on y^e borders of Lake Arey [sic]."¹ Some time later, a party of French traders who had wintered on the White River landed nearby. After the French disembarked, Orontony,² a prominent war chief,³ who was a leader among the dissident faction of his nation who had left Detroit and settled on Sandusky Bay, and the Wyandots called a council of all the Amerindians present. The Wyandots informed the meeting that "they knew that the five nations had taken up the axe against the french from our gov^r [Clinton], but they had not taken the axe, but desired to use their own weapons, which was granted by the rest of

¹Iroquois of the White River. "George Croghan's Lre [letter], accompanying a Lre from the Ingans, an Indian Nation on Lake Ery, dated 26th May, 1747," Pennsylvania Archives, vol. I, pp. 742-743. Croghan added that "Those Ingans ware always in the French interest till now."

²William A. Hunter, "Orontony," in Frances G. Halpenny, ed., Dictionary of Canadian Biography, volume III, 1741 to 1770 (Toronto, 1974), pp. 495-496.

³"Extrait en forme de journal," 1747, AC, C11A, vol. 87, NAC, MG 1, microfilm, reel F-87, ff. 74-74v.

the nations then present."⁴ These formalities disposed of, they attacked "and killed five of y^r French."⁵

The attack at Kichaga was the first action of a loose coalition that formed among anti-French factions within the tribes of the western alliance and the Iroquois of the Ohio country. For want of a better expression, it is convenient to refer to them as "the coalition." With an open blow struck against the French, the coalition began a period of intense diplomatic and military activity. They sought support among other bands, applied to the Iroquois for permission to attack Niagara, approached New York and Philadelphia for logistic support, and attempted to follow up the attack at Kichaga with the capture of Detroit.

⁴"Memorandum of the Cayugas, Ottrowanes head of the Onondagas and Flat Nose's speech to his Excell^{cy} on the 17. day of July 1747 at Albany," NYCD, vol. VI, p. 391. In a letter to the Lieutenant Governor of Pennsylvania, the Amerindians stated that "Last fall when our Kings of y^r Six Nations were Down att Albany, you & our Brother of New York, gave them y^r hatchett to make use of against y^r French, which wee very willingly, & with true hands Tuck hould of, and has Naw Made use of itt." ["To the Hom^{bk} George Thomas Esq^r., Lieutenant Govenor of the Province of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia. L^r from the Indians, dated 16th May, 1747, an Indian Nations on the borders of Lake Ery. Conajachrera, in English, a Broken Kettle, Conaroya. Read in council, 8th June, 1747," Pennsylvania Archives, vol. I, pp. 741-742.]

⁵[Indorsed, "To the Hom^{bk} George Thomas Esq^r., Lieutenant Govenor of the Province of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia. L^r from the Indians, dated 16th May, 1747, an Indian Nations on the borders of Lake Ery. Conajachrera, in English, a Broken Kettle, Conaroya," read in council, 8 June, 1747. Hazard, ed., Pennsylvania Archives, vol. I, pp. 741-742.] See Also "Memorandum of the Cayugas, Ottrowanees head of the Onondagas and Flat nose's speech to his ecellcy on the 17 day of July 1747," NYCD, VI, p. 391; "Extrait en forme de journal," 1747, AC, C11A, vol. 87, NAC, MG 1, microfilm, reel F-87, ff. 74-74v.

Their attempts to expand the coalition proved successful. Two weeks after the attack near Sandusky, the participants were able to report that "we are likewise Joyn'd by ye Misasaga⁶ & Toways, which are all as one with us."⁷ Before long, French observers reported that:

Il semble même que depuis l'irruption des hurons du Détroit toutes les autres nations a leurs exemple se dérangent et veulent prendre parti pour Eux.⁸

At the same time, the coalition began to lay the diplomatic groundwork for an attack on Niagara, which "the Chonondedeys [Wyandot] &c were resolved to destroy as being an impediment in

⁶The Mississauga sent a black belt of wampum to the Delaware and Shawnee "to invite them into the War against the French." [Weiser to Peters, 15 October, 1747, Minutes of the Provincial Council of Pennsylvania, 6 November, 1747, pp. 137]. Shikalamy could not recall of the belt came from the Mississauga, Wyandot, or both. In 1748, he stated that it was the Mississauga. The Ohio tribes passed the belt on to the Iroquois, but did not proclaim "war against the French; [and declared] that they wou'd do nothing against the French before the Six Nations had declared war." [Weiser to the Council, 28 March, 1748, Minutes of the Provincial Council of Pennsylvania, 31 March, 1747, p. 212].

⁷Conagaresa, Sunathoaka, and Kinnera to Owass Giaboga [the Governor of Pennsylvania], 16 May, 1747, Pennsylvania Archives, vol. I, pp. 741-742. See also "Memorandum of the Cayugas, Ottrowanes head of the Onondagas and Flat Nose's speech to his Excell^{ty} on the 17. day of July 1747 at Albany," NYCD, vol. VI, p. 391.

⁸"Extrait en forme de journal," 1747, AC, C11A, vol. 87, NAC, MG 1, microfilm, reel F-87, f. 181. report written on 11 Aug, 1747. The British shared this impression. "This spring, allmost all the ingans in the woods, have declared against y^e French." ["George Croghan's Lre, accompanying a Lre from the Ingans, an Indian Nation on Lake Ery, dated 26th May, 1747," Pennsylvania Archives, vol. I, pp. 742-743].

their way to Oswego."⁹ They were supported in this programme by the Mississaugas, Weas, and Winnebagos who "say a sort of witches about the said fort always keep the path foul and dirty, and for that reason they have resolved to make it clean."¹⁰

As it lay within Iroquois territory, Niagara could not be assailed without Iroquois consent. Consequently:

The foreign nations, ... sent six large belts of wampum to the six nations, desiring their liberty to destroy niagara, and that it should be done very shortly, meaning in a month or so; the six nations have now sent for them to come to their assistance."¹¹

The planned attack, however, never materialized.

However successful the coalition might be in attracting support, Amerindians of the mid-eighteenth century recognized the need for European logistic backing for sustained military enterprises. They had opened hostilities without secure sources of essential matériel, and had to seek this support before taking further action. The coalition consequently made overtures to the Anglo-Americans at New York and Pennsylvania seeking assistance.

⁹Johnson to Clinton, 4 August, 1747, Johnson Papers, vol. I, p. 17.

¹⁰"Memorandum of the Cayugas, Ottowanes head of the Onondagas and Flat Nose's speech to his Excell^y on the 17. day of July 1747 at Albany," NYCD, vol. VI, p. 391.

¹¹Johnson to Clinton, 19 August, 1747, NYCD, vol. VI, p. 389. Johnson believed that "they are likely to obtain [Iroquois consent to an attack on Niagara], having the consent of some of ye chiefs of each nation." Johnson to Clinton, 4 August, 1747, Johnson Papers, vol. I, p. 17.

On 16 May, the Iroquois of the White River had George Croghan write and deliver a letter to the lieutenant governor of Pennsylvania, containing news of the attack at Kichaga operations against the French, "you will consider that we shall be in need of some powder & lead, to carrey on y^r expedition with a Vigor."¹² This letter was read to the Provincial Council on 8 June, 1747. But it was not until 20 July that the council agreed that "a small present ought to be made to the Indians on the Lake Erie to acknowledge the receipt of theirs"¹³ if the Amerindians hoped for a swift response, they were to be disappointed. On 17 September, one of George Croghan's employees arrived in Philadelphia, and informed Croghan that:

the Inguns att this side of Lake Eary is Makeing warr very briskly against the french, butt is very impatient to hear from there brothers, ye english, expecting a present of powder & lead, which if they don't gett, I am of opinion, but the best accounts I can gett, that they will turn to the French, which will be very willing to make up with them again.¹⁴

¹²"To the Hon^{ble} George Thomas Esq^r., Lieutenant Govenor of the Province of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia. L^r from the Indians, dates 16th May, 1747, an Indian Nations on the borders of Lake Ery. Conajachrera, in English, a Broken Kettle, Conaroya. Read in council, 8th June, 1747," Pennsylvania Archives, vol. I, pp. 741-742.

¹³Weiser to Peters, 20 July, 1747, Pennsylvania Archives, vol I, p. 762. Support for the Amerindians of the White River in their war against the French was evidently not a high priority for the Pennsylvanians. Not only was the quantity of matériel derisory relative to the needs of the Amerindians, but the question of support for the coalition was relegated to sixth and last place on an agenda relating to Amerindian affairs.

¹⁴Croghan to Thomas Lawrence, 18 September, 1747, Pennsylvania Archives, vol. I, p. 770. See also Minutes of the Provincial Council of Pennsylvania, 25 September, 1747, pp. 119-120.

By November, it had been decided to send four hundredweight (two hundred kilograms) of bar lead; three half barrels and two quarter casks of powder; two dozen knives; four fusils; and one thousand flints to the coalition.¹⁵ These goods, carried by George Croghan, were not dispatched until the spring of 1748, when the fighting in the west was drawing to a close, and indeed may never have been delivered.¹⁶

The clumsy official Pennsylvania reaction may be partly accounted for by the fact the Amerindians had not attempted to secure agreements from Pennsylvania to provide them with military supplies prior to striking against the French. This meant that news of Franco-Amerindian violence in the west "came to be known first by a letter sent to this government from some of the Six Nations and other Indians seated at Canayahaga [the White River], a place on or near the River Conde, which runs into the Lake Erie."¹⁷ Weiser himself explicitly denied that the Pennsylvania government had ever incited the Lake Erie tribes to violence. When asked to receive a scalp taken near Sandusky:

I told him that I had been concern'd in Indian affairs these many years, but I never knew that the government of Pennsylvania had given the hatchet or employ'd any body

¹⁵Minutes of the Provincial Council of Pennsylvania, 16 November, 1747, pp. 149-151.

¹⁶Minutes of the Provincial Council of Pennsylvania, 18 June, 1748, pp. 287-289; Jennings, Empire of Fortune, p. 34.

¹⁷draft of a letter to Governors Gooch and Ongle, Minutes of the Provincial Council of Pennsylvania, 25 January, 1747, pp. 189-190.

to kill French Men, and that I was sensible the Government had never requested the Indians at Canayahagon to kill french Men.¹⁸

In the event, the only tangible support received by the Wyandots came from Pennsylvania traders going about their usual business.¹⁹

News of the beginning of fighting in the west reached New York by way of the Iroquois in June. New York was now allied to the Wyandots and Mississaugas, but had not sent them any material support. Some material was sent to Oswego, but not delivered to the west. By August, Johnson had sent Lieutenant Visgher "to Oswego with a cargo of good[s], arms ammunition &c for the use of ye foreign Indians & also of the six nations who chuse to go against ye enemy from thence."²⁰ The New Yorkers were intrigued by the possibility of taking Niagara, and even selected an officer to command an expedition against that post.²¹ But they saw it as a

¹⁸Weiser to Peters, 15 October, 1747, Minutes of the Provincial Council of Pennsylvania, 15 October, 1747, pp. 138.

¹⁹In August, two British traders came to Sandusky with munitions. They also met with Wyandot from Detroit. It was the Detroit band's failure to report this contact that, for the French, constituted proof of their continuing liaison with Orontony. ["Journal de ce qui s'est passé de l'Inthéressant a québec a l'occasion des mouvemens de guerre et des differens avis qu'on y a reçu depuis le depart des d. vaisseaux au mois de novembre, 1747," [hereafter "Journal de ce qui s'est passé,"], AC, C11A, vol. 87, NAC, MG 1, microfilm, reel F-87, ff. 176-178.

²⁰Johnson to Clinton, 4 August, 1747, Johnson Papers, vol. I, p. 107; Johnson to Clinton, 14 August, 1747, Johnson Papers, vol. I, p. 107; Lydius to Johnson, 16 June, 1747, Johnson Papers, vol. I, p. 100.

²¹Clinton to Bedford, 20 October, 1748, NYCD, vol. VI pp. 455-456. See also Clinton to the Lords of Trade, 3 June, 1749, NYCD, vol. VI, p. 487.

British enterprise, with Amerindian participation limited to the consent of the Iroquois and "the assistance of the Indian nations to the westward of that fort."²² The actual siege would be carried out by "a proper number of ye kings trocops,"²³ and Niagara would become an outpost of New York with a regular garrison. The reluctance of the assembly to vote sufficient funds thwarted the project.²⁴

Prior to May of 1747, official New York contacts with the western Amerindians had been aimed at attracting them to join in an invasion of Canada which never materialized and attracting their trade. They had not aspired to persuading them to attack the French posts in the west. With the beginning of open conflict between the French and the coalition, new horizons opened for New York policy in the west. Once war began between the French and the coalition, the New Yorkers were eager to exploit the situation. They hoped that the coalition "may be of signal use to distress the french trade, and to cut off all communication between the French on Mississippi river and Canada."²⁵ The governor of New York found, however, that it was easier to provide verbal than material

²²Clinton to Bedford, 20 October, 1748, NYCD, VI, p. 455.

²³Johnson to Clinton, 4 August, 1747, Johnson Papers, vol. I, p. 17.

²⁴Clinton to Bedford, 20 October, 1748, NYCD, vol. VI, pp. 455-456.

²⁵Clinton to the Lords of Trade, 24 July, 1747, NYCD, vol. VI, p. 364.

assistance. "They [the coalition]," wrote Clinton:

...live at so great a distance that it is difficult to correspond with them, and expensive to support them as they expect, but as far as I saw it necessary I have ordered them to be supplied by way of Oswego.²⁶

3.2 Operations in the Detroit area, 1747

Following the attack at Kichaga a Wyandot force, said by New York sources to number one hundred and sixty, travelled to Detroit with the intention of capturing that post.²⁷ "Prest a massacrer tous les françois," they planned to infiltrate the fort and surprise the residents.²⁸ This was a sound plan, which might have enabled the attackers to exploit customary hospitality to overcome the physical defences of the fort, which could otherwise only be taken by a force with artillery. Under normal conditions, it might have succeeded. However, the long French presence in the west had produced a series of personal relationships between the French and Amerindians which made surprise attack difficult, if not

²⁶Clinton to Lords of Trade, 24 July, 1747, NYCD, vol. VI, p. 364. Johnson, when recommending that the British support the coalition in an attack on Niagara, suggested that "the best way to deliver supplies "would be to send these things from Philadelphia, being the nearest way and safest." [Johnson to Clinton, 17 July, 1747, NYCD, vol. VI, p. 386.

²⁷John H. Lydius to Johnson, 16 June, 1747, Johnson Papers, vol. I, p. 100.

²⁸Each warrior was to kill the Frenchmen within whose homes they were spending the night. Josué Dubois Berthelot de Beaucours, "Mémoire de Canada de 1747 [entreprises de Guerre contre les sauvages]," November, 1747, AC, C11A, vol. 87, NAC, MG 1, microfilm, reel F-87, f. 16.

impossible. A Wyandot woman, very probably a Catholic, who had gone to collect wild rice from a barn, overheard warriors planning the attack on the French. She immediately warned one of the Jesuits, who in turn informed Longueuil.²⁹ Thus forewarned Longueuil raised the alarm and ordered the French residents to take refuge in the fort.³⁰ This proved to be the key event of the Franco-Amerindian conflict in the Detroit area.

A coup de main was the only tactic open to Amerindians in warfare against Europeans in fortified posts. Success at Detroit would have sent a shock wave throughout the Great Lakes country, and perhaps decided the waverers in favour of the coalition. Were the coalition to persuade a majority of Amerindians to join them in their struggle against the French, and to obtain logistic support and trade goods from the New York or Pennsylvania, they could succeed. On the other hand, were they to fail to secure either condition, the French were in a position to hold out until the end of hostilities in Europe allowed them to increase the flow of trade

²⁹Beaucours, "Mémoire de Canada de 1747 [entreprises de Guerre contre les sauvages]," November, 1747, AC, C11A, vol. 87, NAC, MG 1, microfilm, reel F-87, f. 16. See also "Extrait en forme de journal," 1747, AC, C11A, vol. 87, NAC, MG 1, microfilm, reel F-87 f. 74v.

³⁰"Extrait en forme de journal," 1747, AC, C11A, vol. 87, NAC, MG 1, microfilm, reel F-87, ff. 74v-75; Madame Joiberte de Longueuil to Maurepas, 2 November, 1747, AC, C11A, vol. 89, NAC, MG 1, microfilm, reel F-89, f. 252v. The Jesuit at Ile aux Bois Blanc, abandoned the mission and withdrew to Detroit.

goods once more, and send relief expeditions into the west.³¹ Frustrated in its attempt to seize the post, the coalition was expected by Longueuil to remain active and harass the post with small war parties.³²

On 4 July, Longueuil wrote that the Ojibwas and Odawas were about to assault Detroit.³³ Orontony was known to be planning an attack on Detroit with the Odawas and Ojibwas. Mikinac,³⁴ an important chief of the Odawa of Detroit, was expected to declare against the French in the event of an attack.³⁵ The apprehended danger was such that the local habitants were unable to secure their harvests. Several cattle had already been taken by the Ojibwas, and some farmhouses burned by unidentified Amerindians.³⁶ The loss of the remaining livestock was expected, and the harvest was deferred

³¹Nonetheless, even though the French could sustain themselves at Detroit indefinitely, their presence was futile without the active cooperation, or at least the passive acquiescence, of the native peoples of the areas.

³²"Extrait en forme de journal," 1747, AC, C11A, vol. 87, NAC, MG 1, microfilm, reel F-87, ff. 74v-75.

³³"Continuation du journal de ce qui c'est passé d'intéressant dans la colonie," 1747, [hereafter "Continuation du journal," 1747], AC, C11A, vol. 87, NAC, MG 1, microfilm, reel F-87, f. 99.

³⁴Donald Chaput, "Mikinac," in Frances G. Halpenny, ed., Dictionary of Canadian Biography, volume III, 1741 to 1770 (Toronto, 1974), pp. 450-451. Such was his influence, concludes Chaput, that "only after his [Mikinac's] death was Pontiac able to gain ascendancy among the Detroit Ottawas."

³⁵"Continuation du journal," 1747, AC, C11A, vol. 87, NAC, MG 1, microfilm, reel F-87, f. 99.

³⁶"Extrait en forme de journal," 1747, AC, C11A, vol. 87, NAC, MG 1, microfilm, reel F-87, f. 75.

until the arrival of the convoy from Montreal.³⁷ Longueuil was warned several times of the latent hostility of the Potawatomis, "qui se rangeront du coste le plus fort"³⁸ while the Odawas "paroit fort insensible aux maux qui menacent le fort et ne prend aucun soin de nous ayder."³⁹ This gloomy picture was confirmed by a pro-French Odawa named Niqui8anan, who reported that the Iroquois, Wyandots and Catawbas "s'entendoient avec l'anglois pour détruire le françois et le chasser jusques au dela de la mer." He presented a chilling portrait of an alliance system on the verge of collapse. The Odawas of Detroit were divided, the Potawatomis would follow their lead, while the Mississaugas and Ojibwas had joined the nations leagued against the French, and the Odawas of Saginaw had already attacked a French party.⁴⁰ Yet it was not until August that the coalition turned from the destruction of property to violence against Frenchmen once more. On 31 August, a resident of Detroit named Martineau who strayed into the bush about four kilometres from the fort was surprised by four Ojibwas of the Rivière au

³⁷"Continuation du journal," 1747, AC, C11A, vol. 87, NAC, MG 1, microfilm, reel F-87, f. 99."

³⁸"Continuation du journal," 1747, AC, C11A, vol. 87, NAC, MG 1, microfilm, reel F-87, f. 99."

³⁹"Journal de ce qui s'est passé," AC, C11A, vol. 87, NAC, MG 1, microfilm, reel F-87, ff. 176-178.

⁴⁰"Extrait en forme de journal," 1747, AC, C11A, vol. 87, NAC, MG 1, microfilm, reel F-87, f. 82v. He added that seventy Odawa of Saginaw, together with some Ojibwa from Grosse Ile were reported to be about to "devoit partir dans peu de jours et venir la nuit parler aux" Odawa of Michilimakinac. On 2 July, the commandant and missionary at Michilimakinac met secretly with an Odawa named Niqui8anan who had come there to bring news of events in Detroit.

Sable.⁴¹

However bleak the situation may have looked in June and July of 1747, Longueuil could still report that "nous avons aussy bien des sauvages dans nôtre party qui nous paroissent bien attaché."⁴² The reaction of those of the western allies who refrained from immediately throwing in their lot with the coalition was mixed, but inclined towards an expression of benevolence and good wishes, together with neutrality.

In late June, immediately following the apprehended attack on Detroit, Longueuil called an assembly of the principal local chiefs, and "leur parla de manière a les arreter et ils s'excusent le mieux qu'ils purent."⁴³ At this meeting, or soon after, representatives of the Odawas spoke at Detroit, and assured him that they had not been involved in attacks upon the French.⁴⁴ At

⁴¹"Journal de ce qui s'est passé," AC, C11A, vol. 87, NAC, MG 1, microfilm, reel F-87, ff. 178v-179. The Ojibwa of the Rivière au Sables were the same band that had killed a number of Canadians at "Chibaoemany" (probably the site known as La Cloche, near Lake Michigan). They were reported to have sent Matineau's scalp and two pieces of cloth from the pillage at Chibaoemany to the Iroquois.

⁴²Beaucours, "Mémoire de Canada de 1747 [entreprises de Guerre contre les sauvages]," November, 1747, AC, C11A, vol. 87, NAC, MG 1, microfilm, reel F-87, f. 16.

⁴³Beaucours, "Mémoire de Canada de 1747 [entreprises de Guerre contre les sauvages]," November, 1747, AC, C11A, vol. 87, NAC, MG 1, microfilm, reel F-87, f. 16.

⁴⁴"Extrait en forme de journal," 1747, AC, C11A, vol. 87, NAC, MG 1, microfilm, reel F-87, f. 74v.

the same time, a party of Wyandots informed Longueuil that their band had not taken part in Orontony's attack.⁴⁵

In spite of these encouraging statements, Longueuil reported that the Odawas and Wyandots of Detroit did not declare themselves "en nôtre faveur," and added that "même pour peu qu'elles demeurent dans l'inaction," the French would find the situation difficult. It is true, he said, that they:

...désapprouvent fort la mauvaise conduite de ces malheureux et qu'ils tâchent de les contenir, mais que cela ne donne aucune certitude de leurs bonnes intentions.⁴⁶

The Odawas and Potawatomis had gone as far as promising to burn the Wyandot village on Bois Blanc Island, but never actually carried out this project.⁴⁷ Of the bands in the Detroit area, only the Potawatomis, together with the Odawa band led by the elderly

⁴⁵The Wyandot were "de la bande de Sastaredzy et Taychatin." ["Extrait en forme de journal," 1747, AC, C11A, vol. 87, NAC, MG 1, microfilm, reel F-87, f. 74v]. The two men were the leading chiefs of the Wyandot faction had remained at Detroit and within the French alliance. Sastaredzy was then the "premier chef de la nation huronne," and Taychatin an "autre chef." At the time of the attack, the two chiefs themselves had accompanied the party that travelled from Detroit with Belestre to Montreal. [*ibid.* f. 74v, 75, 77]. The absence of these important pro-French leaders at a critical moment may have affected the reactions of their band. As of 24 and 25 August, 1747 several Wyandot war parties had left for or returned from forays against the Chickasaws. Those who returned "ont esté voir m. de Longueuil comme gens qui n'ont aucune part aux affaire de nicolas [Orontony], mais les ambiguités de leurs discours ne donnent rien de bon a penser." ["Journal de ce qui s'est passé," AC, C11A, vol. 87, NAC, MG 1, microfilm, reel F-87, f.176].

⁴⁶"Extrait en forme de journal," 1747, AC, C11A, vol. 87, NAC, MG 1, microfilm, reel F-87, f. 75.

⁴⁷"Continuation du journal," 1747, AC, C11A, vol. 87, NAC, MG 1, microfilm, reel F-87, f. 99.

Kinousaki,⁴⁸ a chief whose actions in cooperation with the French dated back to 1700, were considered by Longueuil to be reliable.⁴⁹

The debates that must have raged in Amerindian councils between those who were for or against fighting the French, or wished to remain passive and await events are suggested by Pontiac's account of events in 1763. On 25 May, 1763, in conversation with French settlers, the Odawa leader asserted that:

When the Chippewas and Ottawas of Michilimakinac, and all the northern nations, came with the Sauk and Foxes to destroy you, who was it that defended you? Was it not I and my men? When Makinac, the great chief of all these nations, said in his council that he would carry the head of your commander to his village, and devour his heart and drink his blood, did I not take up your cause and go to his village and tell him that if he wanted to kill the French he would have to begin first with me and my men?⁵⁰

The outcome was effective neutrality in May-August, 1747. When asked to take an active role, the Odawas and Potawatomis "s'en deffendent sous divers prêtextes. Il est evident qu'ils fuyent les

⁴⁸Donald B. Smith, "Kinousaki," in Frances G. Halpenny, ed., Dictionary of Canadian Biography, volume III, 1741 to 1770 (Toronto, 1974), p. 328.

⁴⁹"Journal de ce qui s'est passé," AC, C11A, vol. 87, NAC, MG 1, microfilm, reel F-87, ff. 99, 176-178.

⁵⁰Robert Navarre, "The Journal of Pontiac's Conspiracy of the Indians against the English, and of the siege of Fort Detroit by four different nations, beginning May 7, 1763," in M.M. Quaife, ed., R. C. Ford, translator, The Siege of Detroit in 1763 (Chicago, 1958), p. 99. Navarre was the subdelegate of the Intendant at Detroit between 1743-1752 and 1752-1759, and fluent enough in Amerindian languages to act as an interpreter. See Burton Historical Collection Staff, "Robert Navarre," in Frances G. Halpenny, ed., Dictionary of Canadian Biography, volume IV, 1771 to 1800 (Toronto, 1979), pp. 579-580.

occasions de s'offenser les uns et les autres."⁵¹

Most of the Detroit area bands remained more or less neutral, desiring neither to make war upon the French nor their relatives and allies who had joined the coalition. This reluctance may have been partly the result of their long association with the French, with whom they had maintained a reasonably satisfactory, voluntary relationship for over a century. During that time, they had demonstrated both the ability and will to provide a steady supply of manufactured goods and proven capacity to send large expeditionary forces to the west, against the Iroquois in the seventeenth century and the Chickasaws and Foxes in the eighteenth. The warriors fighting the French had yet to produce a tangible success like the capture of a major post. Moreover, the New Yorkers had failed to make good on their promise to invade Canada in 1746 and neither New York nor Pennsylvania had provided material support for the coalition.

On the other hand, the French seemed to expect the Amerindians to do their fighting for them. Going against the coalition openly would have meant fighting against their friends and relatives. The French lacked trade goods, and seemed to be unwilling, in the months after the attack at Sandusky, either to avenge the killings or to prevent members of the coalition from raiding in the environs

⁵¹"Continuation du journal," 1747, AC, C11A, vol. 87, NAC, MG 1, microfilm, reel F-87, f. 99.

of Detroit. Longueuil felt himself to be incapable of taking active measures against the coalition. This enforced passivity, he said, "étonne les autres nations et leur donne de mauvaises pensées sur nôtre compte."⁵² Openly declaring for the French was evidently not at that time an attractive option, and the French could do little to make it so.

3.3 Orontony's diplomatic offensive, 1747

As the French huddled in Detroit, Orontony and other leaders of the coalition grappled with the problem of neutralizing French diplomacy and mobilizing other Amerindians. Handicapped by the absence of a solid success like the capture of Detroit or Niagara and material support from the New York or Pennsylvania, they had only a limited amount of time in which to achieve their goals before the French could be expected to recover. Overall, in the summer of 1747, the coalition achieved several tactical diplomatic successes, but failed in their larger goals of forming a general alliance against the French.

Although refraining from direct action in the Detroit area, Orontony maintained contact with the Odawas of Saginaw, the Ojibwas, and the Wyandots who remained at Detroit, and attempted to

⁵²"Journal de ce qui s'est passé," AC, C11A, vol. 87, NAC, MG 1, microfilm, reel F-87, ff. 176-178.

organize a second assault on Detroit.⁵³ These efforts, and the strength of the anti-French action among these tribes was successful enough that the French at Detroit believed that they were threatened with imminent attack.⁵⁴

When a delegation from the White River set out to travel to Detroit following the killings at Kichaga, Orontony caused them to return home.⁵⁵ Among the Miamis, this diplomacy was effective in neutralizing a powerful pro-French faction. The Miamis were divided between a faction led by Pied Froid, who was considered by the French to be the leader of the Miamis, which saw the best interests of the Miamis as lying with the French, and those who preferred to look to the coalition. In the spring of 1747, Alexandre Dagneau Douville,⁵⁶ a Canadian officer fluent enough in Amerindian languages to serve as an interpreter, travelled to the head of the Maumee River to invite the Miamis to descend to Montreal to take part in the war against New York and New England. On 3 July, he

⁵³"Continuation du journal," 1747, AC, C11A, vol. 87, NAC, MG 1, microfilm, reel F-87, f. 99; "Journal de ce qui s'est passé," AC, C11A, vol. 87, NAC, MG 1, microfilm, reel F-87, ff. 176-178.

⁵⁴"Continuation du journal," 1747, AC, C11A, vol. 87, NAC, MG 1, microfilm, reel F-87, f. 99.

⁵⁵This delegation from the White River presumably intended to disavow any connection with the attack. ["Journal de ce qui s'est passé," AC, C11A, vol. 87, NAC, MG 1, microfilm, reel F-87, f. 176v]. In August, at about the same time, Orontony persuaded a Shawnee delegation to the French to turn back. Only a single Shawnee representative went on to Detroit.

⁵⁶Donald Chaput, "Alexandre Dagneau Douville," Frances G. Halpenny, ed., Dictionary of Canadian Biography, volume IV, 1771 to 1800 (Toronto, 1979), pp. 191-192.

left that post with a party of Miamis that included Pied Froid, Porcuépic, another pro-French Miami chief, and "leurs jeunes gens." However, the party reached Detroit at the same time as word of the troubles at Michilimakinac, and a report of a Mohawk war party at the Niagara portage. This led the Miamis to decide to return home.⁵⁷ the Miamis remained at Detroit for over two weeks, during which they were entertained at great expense.⁵⁸ Prior to their departure, the Miamis asked that Beauharnois be informed "de leur sentiment pour le françois."⁵⁹

Orontony, however, did not remain idle. Even as Pied Froid's delegation assured the French of their continued good will, another Miami band was with Orontony at Sandusky.⁶⁰ Moreover, he employed Seneca messengers to deliver a belt to the Miamis.⁶¹ These

⁵⁷The abstract of Douville's report states that "Ce a obligé le S. Douville a renvoyer ces sauvages." This may have been since either course risked bringing the Miamis into a potentially awkward confrontation with the coalition in the north, or the Mohawk in the south. ["Journal de ce qui s'est passé," AC, C11A, vol. 87, NAC, MG 1, microfilm, reel F-87, f. 177v]. Significantly, he added that "Ces nations manquent absolument de poudre." which both limited their military potential and increased the chance that they might attack the French.

⁵⁸"Journal de ce qui s'est passé," AC, C11A, vol. 87, NAC, MG 1, microfilm, reel F-87, f. 177.

⁵⁹"Journal de ce qui s'est passé," AC, C11A, vol. 87, NAC, MG 1, microfilm, reel F-87, f. 177v.

⁶⁰"Journal de ce qui s'est passé," AC, C11A, vol. 87, NAC, MG 1, microfilm, reel F-87, f. 177.

⁶¹Although since leaving the Fort des Miamis 3 July, Douville had heard "que tout y estoit fort tranquille." he was also informed that the Seneca had given, on behalf of the British, a collar to La Demoiselle, chief of a faction of the Miamis "qui ont pris le party

emissaries imparted the disinformation that Detroit had been razed and in consequence the Miamis should kill the Frenchmen living among them.⁶² Such was the impact of Orontony's diplomacy, and the receptiveness of the Miamis that before long, it was reported that the Miamis, and perhaps the Weas, were "en désordre." On 5 July, 1747, The Miamis seized but did not harm the eight Frenchmen in the post, pillaged it thoroughly and burned part of the trading post. Two of their captives were released unconditionally, and arrived without incident at Detroit on 7 October.⁶³

They had not arrived on 22 September, when the relief expedition from Montreal arrived at Detroit. Unaware of events at the Miamis, but knowing of Orontony's belt, Longueuil was reluctant to allow the traders to travel on to that post until he made inquiries. He sent four French députés to the Miamis to invite them to come to Detroit. They arrived after the burning of the fort, but were able to persuade a large party to return with them to Detroit.⁶⁴

des anglois." ["Journal de ce qui s'est passé," AC, C11A, vol. 87, NAC, MG 1, microfilm, reel F-87, ff. 177v-178].

⁶²"Journal de ce qui s'est passé," AC, C11A, vol. 87, NAC, MG 1, microfilm, reel F-87, f. 179.

⁶³"Journal de ce qui s'est passé," AC, C11A, vol. 87, NAC, MG 1, microfilm, reel F-87, f. 179; "Memoire des Utensils que le nommé Lépine soldat de la garnison du fort des Miamis, a entre ses mains, pour amener par ordre de Monsieur Le General, Les Miamis et autres sauvages des environs, lesquels ont été confondu dans le pillage qu'on fait les Miamis du dit fort le 5 Juillet, 1747," AC, C11A, vol. 92, NAC, MG 1, microfilm, reel F-92, f. 110.

⁶⁴"Journal de ce qui s'est passé," AC, C11A, vol. 87, NAC, MG 1, microfilm, reel F-87, f. 179v.

Orontony may have learned of the departure of the French delegation from his compatriots in Detroit, and taken countermeasures. For he sent a second collar to the Miamis, which confirmed the first, and caused the Miamis to return to their village, and send only two delegates instead of a large party to Detroit.⁶⁵ At Detroit, the two Miamis met with Longueuil and were quickly sent back "pour détromper cette nation des mauvais discours" of Orontony. With them went Jaret, a Miami chief, who had spent the summer at Detroit, "pour tacher de remettre le bon ordre et encore plus pour la sureté des 6 françois détenus."⁶⁶

Willingness to renounce the French alliance extended as far west at the Illinois country. The nations of this region were suffering from a serious shortage of European products, since their French trading partners had not received supplies from New Orleans since the spring of 1746. Towards the end of July, the Illinois were visited by three Amerindians "du fond du lac"⁶⁷ who carried an invitation from the Abenakis, Iroquois, Odawas, Winnebagos, Wyandots, and nations of the Wabash to renounce the French alliance. If the Illinois themselves hesitated to attack the French, they were invited to go to the Cahokias and allow the other tribes to eliminate the French. Once the French traders had been

⁶⁵"Journal de ce qui s'est passé," AC, C11A, vol. 87, NAC, MG 1, microfilm, reel F-87, f. 179v.

⁶⁶"Journal de ce qui s'est passé," AC, C11A, vol. 87, NAC, MG 1, microfilm, reel F-87, f. 179v.

⁶⁷Probably the Miamis or Wyandots.

eliminated, Anglo-Americans would travel to the Illinois with abundant supplies of trade goods. The Illinois found this discourse convincing, and were about to decide against the French, when the commandant of the Illinois, the Chevalier de Berthet, intervened.⁶⁸

Berthet had already been informed of the attacks upon Frenchmen on Lake Erie by a Wyandot who had wintered on the Scioto among the Shawnees. He called an assembly, informed the Illinois that he already knew of the coalition that had formed against the French, and persuaded them to reject the solicitations of this coalition.⁶⁹

Out of contact with New Orleans, and desperately short of supplies, Berthet wrote to Longueuil at Detroit and requested assistance. This aid, he said, was needed "pour parer l'orage qui menace le pais des illinois."⁷⁰ In the meantime, he ordered that the outlying French settlements in the Illinois be abandoned and concentrated

⁶⁸"Journal de ce qui s'est passé," AC, C11A, vol. 87, NAC, MG 1, microfilm, reel F-87, ff. 181-181v.

⁶⁹This rejection was symbolized by the return to the coalition emissaries of "la parole en question que consistoit en une coquille, un calumet et du tabac." ["Journal de ce qui s'est passé," AC, C11A, vol. 87, NAC, MG 1, microfilm, reel F-87, ff. 181-181v].

⁷⁰ He also sent three leading Illinois chiefs to meet with Pierre de Rigaud de Vaudreuil, governor of Louisiana, "afin de pouvoir par la gagner du temps et arrester les mauvais desseins que cete nation pouvoit avoir [sic] contre nous." ["Extrait en forme de journal," 1747, AC, C11A, vol. 87, NAC, MG 1, microfilm, reel F-87, ff. 182-182v].

his forces in Kaskaskia.⁷¹

Even where Amerindians elected to hold to their alliance with the French, the outbreak of violence in the west produced an immediate paralysis of Amerindian military contributions to the French war effort in the centre. In the spring of 1747, a contingent of Weas together with warriors from other tribes of the Wabash River, had been en route to Montreal with the Chevalier de la Peyrade, the commandant of Fort Ouyatanons. Word of the activities of the coalition, however, had reached the Maumee River. This news obliged the warriors of the Wabash to return to their homes, where la Peyrade left them "assez tranquilles" and returned to Detroit.⁷²

In spite of the rising tide of violence in the west, there were some areas where life continued more or less as usual. Even as Fort des Miamis burned, French traders and their families remained quietly at Fort Ouyatanon. Longueuil had no intention of abandoning it, as in that region "il ne s'est fait encore aucun désordre et ou il pouvoit en arriver de grande faute de secours." Moreover, he had previously agreed to send traders to the Kicapous, Mascoutens, Winnebagos and Weas, and "il ne pouvoient manquer de parole puis que ces nations luy avoient tenu a [sic] leur." Consequently, a forty-person convoy of traders and trade goods was dispatched to

⁷¹"Journal de ce qui s'est passé," AC, C11A, vol. 87, NAC, MG 1, microfilm, reel F-87, ff. 181v-182.

⁷²"Journal de ce qui s'est passé," AC, C11A, vol. 87, NAC, MG 1, microfilm, reel F-87, f. 178.

Fort Ouyatanon in the fall of 1747.⁷³

Life at fort St. Joseph remained equally sedate. The local Potawatomis rejected the coalition emissaries, and spoke repeatedly of "l'attachement qu'ils ont eû depuis longtemps et qu'ils continueront d'avoir pour leur pere le francois." Just as encouraging, a party of fifty Weas came to that post to:

...témoigner la peine qu'ils ressentoient du coup fait par les hurons au Détroit, qu'ils estoient prêtes a fraper sur ceux qui avoient tué le françois que c'estoit a leur père de parler.⁷⁴

3.4 Tentative offers of peace from the Three Fires

The French believed that the arrival of a convoy carrying supplies from Montreal brought anti-French activities to an end.⁷⁵ However, prior to that date, the Three Fires had already begun to shift away from neutrality and towards taking action to restore tranquillity to Franco-Amerindian relations. As time passed, it became apparent that the coalition was not about either to capture a major post or receive substantial support from New York or Pennsylvania. At some point between 15 August and 22 September, 1747, Odawa and Potawatomi delegates came to Detroit to renew their alliance with

⁷³"Journal de ce qui s'est passé," AC, C11A, vol. 87, NAC, MG 1, microfilm, reel F-87, f. 190v.

⁷⁴"Journal de ce qui s'est passé," AC, C11A, vol. 87, NAC, MG 1, microfilm, reel F-87, f. 178.

⁷⁵"Journal de ce qui s'est passé," AC, C11A, vol. 87, NAC, MG 1, microfilm, reel F-87, f. 179.

the French. Although skeptical— "leur conduite passée luy donne tout lieu de douter de leur sincere fidélité—" Longueuil nonetheless held a council, at which he communicated the conditions prescribed by Beauharnois for peace with the Wyandots.⁷⁶

The governor general had sent:

...paroles par lesquelles M. de Longueuil doit leur demander que les meurtriers luy soient amenés pour en disposer a sa volonté, et qu'en attendant, il faut qu'ils se déclarent contre l'anglois auteur de leur crime, qu'ils ayent a fraper sur luy, et qu'ils donnent des preuves de leur repentir par beaucoup de prisonniers qu'autrement leur pere deviendra leur ennemy juré et irréconciliable.⁷⁷

The assembly, said Longueuil, "a applaudi" this message, and a Wyandot delegation was sent to inform Orontony of these terms. He accepted, but temporized, stating that he would come to Detroit to make peace, but only after the return of Sastaredzy from Canada.⁷⁸ But even as "ce traître" spoke with the pro-French Wyandots, his messengers were on the way to inform the Miamis for the second time that Detroit had been successfully attacked and razed to the ground.⁷⁹

⁷⁶"Journal de ce qui s'est passé," AC, C11A, vol. 87, NAC, MG 1, microfilm, reel F-87, ff. 179v-180, 180v.

⁷⁷"Extrait en forme de journal," 1747, AC, C11A, vol. 87, NAC, MG 1, microfilm, reel F-87, ff. 75v-76.

⁷⁸Sastaredzy had died at Quebec on 4 August, 1747. [marginal note in "Journal de ce qui s'est passé," AC, C11A, vol. 87, NAC, MG 1, microfilm, reel F-87, f. 180.

⁷⁹"Journal de ce qui s'est passé," AC, C11A, vol. 87, NAC, MG 1, microfilm, reel F-87, f. 180.

At the same time, the Ojibwas from above Detroit, came to the fort "demander azile." Longueuil received them on condition that they agree to "estre sage." And thirty Odawa families from Saginaw arrived for the same reason, and assured the French "qu'elles nous servient fideles."⁸⁰

Longueuil remained skeptical regarding this renewal of the Franco-Amerindian alliance,⁸¹ suspecting that "Ces nations ne cherchent qu'a tiré de nous leurs besoins et a trouver l'occasion favourable de nous trahir a coup sur." In spite of the protestations of friendship by the allies, Longueuil did not consider conditions to be safe enough to allow the furs that had been accumulated at Detroit to be sent to Montreal. Lacking provisions to feed the residents of Detroit beyond the winter of 1747-1748, and the force to feel secure, Longueuil requested that reinforcements and provisions be delivered early in the spring.⁸²

⁸⁰"Journal de ce qui s'est passé," AC, C11A, vol. 87, NAC, MG 1, microfilm, reel F-87, ff. 179v-180, 180v.

⁸¹The Odawas and Ojibwas, said Longueuil, "ont crû qu'il suffisoit pour rentrer dans notre premiere confiance de sacrifier un malheureux esclave qu'ils avoient et qu'ils ont accusé estre venu aux environs du fort a mauvais dessein." The prisoner was given to Longueuil, who, obliged to accept, gave him to the Abenakis who had accompanied the convoy to Montreal. ["Journal de ce qui s'est passé," AC, C11A, vol. 87, NAC, MG 1, microfilm, reel F-87, f. 180v].

⁸²"Journal de ce qui s'est passé," AC, C11A, vol. 87, NAC, MG 1, microfilm, reel F-87, f. 180v.

3.5 The relief of Detroit, 1747

French military policy in the spring of 1747 may have exacerbated conditions in the west. By 21 May, 1747 most of the voyageurs who were to crew the canoes for the western posts were in Montreal and preparing to leave. However, French officials in Quebec were contemplating a major operation in the Lake Champlain corridor, and pondering conscripting the voyageurs for this expedition.⁸³

The question of the departure of the convoys for Detroit and Michilimakinac remained in abeyance until 26 June, when it was decided that it was no longer possible to retain the canoes, in view of the importance of delivering trade goods "aux sauvages qui en manquent absolument."⁸⁴ The convoy to Detroit and the southern posts was to be commanded by Ensign Dubuisson and escorted by about 100 Frenchmen and Amerindians, to guard against attack by the Mohawks.⁸⁵

In spite of this urgency, the fur brigades were still in Canada in July.⁸⁶ The merchants of the colony, moreover, were not

⁸³"Extrait en forme de journal," 1747, AC, C11A, vol. 87, NAC, MG 1, microfilm, reel F-87, f. 42v.

⁸⁴"Extrait en forme de journal," 1747, AC, C11A, vol. 87, NAC, MG 1, microfilm, reel F-87, f. 64v. entry of 26 June, 1747.

⁸⁵"Extrait en forme de journal," 1747, AC, C11A, vol. 87, NAC, MG 1, microfilm, reel F-87, ff. 64v-65.

⁸⁶Canadian voyageurs were most reluctant to travel to the west in 1747. Crews were found for the canoes "non sans beaucoup de difficultés de la part des habitans qui sont employés au convoi a cause des risques et qu'ils craignent d'hiverner au Détroit. Il a fallu employer les menaces et meme des chatiments pour les faire marcher." ["Extrait en forme de journal," 1747, AC, C11A, vol. 87,

enthusiastic. The farmers of several posts⁸⁷ asked to be relieved of their obligation to pay the rent for their posts, alleging considerable losses. Once again, it proved necessary to subsidize the trade by forgoing or reducing fees for congés.⁸⁸

Against this background of faltering and delay, news of the outbreak of violence in the west arrived on 20 July.⁸⁹ Two days later, Beauharnois had drawn up instructions regarding the handling of the crisis.⁹⁰ Orders were sent to Montreal to expedite the departure of the Detroit convoy with a strong escort.⁹¹ Longueuil was permitted to retain the whole of the escort, as well as the voyageurs and engagés if they were required for the defence of

NAC, MG 1, microfilm, reel F-87, ff. 79v-80. report of 31 July, 1747].

⁸⁷Forts Kaministiquia, La Baye, La Pointe, Mer de l'ouest, Michipicoton, Miamis, Nipigon, Ouyatanons, St. Joseph, and Vincennes.

⁸⁸La Galissonnière and Hocquart to Maurepas, 7 October, 1747, AC, C11A, vol. 87, NAC, MG 1, microfilm, reel F-87, ff. 123v-124. Nine canoes were allowed to travel to Detroit free of charge. Of ten canoes which travelled to Michilimakinac, nine paid four hundred livres, and carried an eight hundred pound cargo for the Crown, and the other paid seven hundred livres, but carried no Crown cargo.

⁸⁹"Extrait en forme de journal," 1747, AC, C11A, vol. 87, NAC, MG 1, microfilm, reel F-87, ff. 74-74v.

⁹⁰"Extrait en forme de journal," 1747, AC, C11A, vol. 87, NAC, MG 1, microfilm, reel F-87, f. 75v.

⁹¹"Extrait en forme de journal," 1747, AC, C11A, vol. 87, NAC, MG 1, microfilm, reel F-87, f. 76.

Detroit.⁹² On 31 July, the convoy, escorted by one hundred and fifty men, including the merchants and their engagés, finally departed. Their voyage was uneventful, broken only by an encounter with an Irish deserter from the garrison of Oswego and his family and another soldier. By 8 September, the convoy was at Niagara, and on 22 September, arrived without incident at Detroit.⁹³

It was hoped that the arrival of the convoy, and the presence of Amerindians who had been campaigning in Canada and were returning home laden with presents, would neutralize British statements that the French were unable to provide their allies with trade goods, since their ships had been seized and Quebec captured.⁹⁴

Nonetheless, the Odawas and Potawatomis had repeatedly warned Longueuil that if the French from Montreal were to separate and go out to the posts, "les ennemis recommenceroient de nouveau leurs

⁹²"Extrait en forme de journal," 1747, AC, C11A, vol. 87, NAC, MG 1, microfilm, reel F-87, f. 76. The traders were to be held at Detroit over the winter only in case of dire necessity, and would be maintained at the expense of the Crown.

⁹³A potentially dangerous incident at Niagara, provoked by "quelque ivrognes de garde qui avoient fort mal traité le grand chef des sonontsans" had been smoothed over by a visit by a Canadian officer to the "village du petit rapide." ["Continuation du journal," 1747, AC, C11A, vol. 87, NAC, MG 1, microfilm, reel F-87, ff. 99v-100. See also "Journal de ce qui s'est passé," AC, C11A, vol. 87, NAC, MG 1, microfilm, reel F-87, f. 185v].

⁹⁴Beaucours, "Mémoire de Canada de 1747 [entreprises de Guerre contre les sauvages], 1 November, 1747, AC, C11A, vol. 87, NAC, MG 1, microfilm, reel F-87, f. 16v.

menaces et leur hostilités."⁹⁵ The continued uncertainty led Longueuil to request reinforcements of men and provisions early in the spring of 1748, as there was not enough food at Detroit to hold out for a long time. As Longueuil would not send traders to Fort des Miamis until calm was restored, Douville was sent to Montreal with forty Frenchmen and the Abenakis who had formed part of the escort of the convoy to go to Montreal to report on the situation at Detroit.⁹⁶ The fort was crammed with pelts, which could not be sent down until the next year, after the arrival of assistance from Montreal.⁹⁷

3.6 Operations in the Michilimakinac area, 1747

The situation in the upper lakes was somewhat less complex than in the Detroit area, since only the Odawas and Ojibwas were involved in attacks on the French. Distance insulated them to a greater extent from the Anglo-French conflict. There are no references in French documents to specific grievances relating to trading practices and prices that one finds in the south. Nonetheless, the Three Fires of the upper lakes were in contact with their cousins to the south, were subject to the same economic pressures, and

⁹⁵"Journal de ce qui s'est passé," AC, C11A, vol. 87, NAC, MG 1, microfilm, reel F-87, f. 180v.

⁹⁶"Journal de ce qui s'est passé," AC, C11A, vol. 87, NAC, MG 1, microfilm, reel F-87, ff. 180v-181.

⁹⁷"Journal de ce qui s'est passé," AC, C11A, vol. 87, NAC, MG 1, microfilm, reel F-87, f. 180.

resorted to the same remedies.

In the winter of 1746-1747, Lacorne experienced no difficulty in attracting warriors from Michilimakinac who were willing to travel to Canada to fight against New England and New York, and by 6 May (four days after the attack at Kichaga) he was ready to leave Michilimakinac with a substantial contingent, and many more had agreed to follow them later in the year.⁹⁸ This situation changed after the attack at Kichaga. The Odawas had been prepared to travel in force to Montreal to fight alongside the French, "mais la trahison des hurons au Detroit etant venu a leur connoissance les à [sic] arretér [sic]."⁹⁹ This news seems to have acted as a catalyst for the expression of their grievances, for by July they too were contemplating active measures against the French.

On 2 July, 1747, an Odawa from Detroit, named Niqui8anan, arrived at Michilimakinac. He proved to be a disturbing visitor. At a secret meeting with Charles Joseph de Noyelles de Fleurimont,¹⁰⁰

⁹⁸Lacorne to Maurepas, 1 October, 1747, AC, C11A, vol. 89, NAC, MG 1, microfilm, reel F-89, f. 235v; "Extrait en forme de journal," 1747, AC, C11A, vol. 87, NAC, MG 1, microfilm, reel F-87, f. 62v; Beaucours, "Mémoire de Canada de 1747 [entreprises de Guerre contre les sauvages]," November, 1747, AC, C11A, vol. 87, NAC, MG 1, microfilm, reel F-87, f. 16v.

⁹⁹Beaucours, "Mémoire de Canada de 1747 [entreprises de Guerre contre les sauvages]," November, 1747, AC, C11A, vol. 87, NAC, MG 1, microfilm, reel F-87, f. 16v.

¹⁰⁰S. Dale Standen, "Nicolas-Joseph de Noyelles de Fleurimont," in Frances G. Halpenny, ed., Dictionary of Canadian Biography, volume III, 1741 to 1770 (Toronto, 1974), pp. 491-493. Charles-Joseph was the son of the subject of this biography.

acting as commandant of Michilimakinac in the absence of Lacorne, and the missionary, he informed them of the emergence of the anti-French coalition in the Detroit area. The Odawas of Michilimakinac, he said, would already have turned against the French had not many of their warriors been in Montreal. Seventy warriors from Saginaw and a contingent from the Ojibwas of Grosse Ile¹⁰¹ were coming to Michilimakinac. They planned to arrive secretly at night to meet with the Odawas. Niquisanan warned the Frenchmen that these bands might then decide to attack, and suggested that the French remain on guard and allow no one to leave the post to hunt.¹⁰²

With only twenty-eight men in the Fort, de Noyelles was in a difficult position. He took what measures he could to place his post in a state of defence, and decided to retain the voyageurs of the fur brigades for the northern posts at Michilimakinac until he received further orders or until conditions had changed.¹⁰³ The Ojibwas and Odawas attempted to seize the fort by quietly infiltrating under the pretext of ordinary business, then making a surprise attack from within. On 3 July:

...une foule de jeunes gens s'estoient armés de couteaux dans un conseil qui avoit esté assemblé a leur demande ... et qui se tournâ en crialleries.

Their hostile intentions were discovered and:

¹⁰¹An island just north of Makinac Island.

¹⁰²"Extrait en forme de journal," 1747, AC, C11A, vol. 87, NAC, MG 1, microfilm, reel F-87, f. 82v.

¹⁰³"Extrait en forme de journal," 1747, AC, C11A, vol. 87, NAC, MG 1, microfilm, reel F-87, ff. 82v-83.

On les obligea de sortir en sonnante la [sic] messe [sic] et battant la retraite comme il est d'usage en faisant même quelques mouvements comme pour se mettre sur la deffensive.

Following this incident, Noyelles only allowed Amerindians to enter the fort under security precautions.¹⁰⁴

The failure to seize the fort at Michilimakinac, as at Detroit, was critical for the success of the coalition. French movements might be severely circumscribed, but as long as the French possessed a major fort that could only be taken by stealth or artillery, they were in a position to ride out the storm and await the return of greater tranquillity. Thwarted in their attempt to capture Michilimakinac, the Ojibwas "ont fait diverses insultes et menaces dans le fort et aux environs," and killed all of the cattle, horses, and other livestock that they could catch.¹⁰⁵ Before long, the violence had spread and resulted in the "dérangement de toutes les nations" of Michilimakinac and vicinity, including the Mississaugas, Odawas, and Ojibwas.¹⁰⁶

Nonetheless, a few days after the meeting of 3 July, the canoes

¹⁰⁴"Extrait en forme de journal," 1747, AC, C11A, vol. 87, NAC, MG 1, microfilm, reel F-87, f. 82. A similar attempt was made to capture Detroit by Pontiac in 1763, when British precautions closely resembled those of the French. see Navarre, "Journal of Pontiac's Conspiracy," pp. 17-30.

¹⁰⁵"Extrait en forme de journal," 1747, AC, C11A, vol. 87, NAC, MG 1, microfilm, reel F-87, f. 82.

¹⁰⁶"Extrait en forme de journal, 1747," AC, C11A, vol. 87, NAC, MG 1, microfilm, reel F-87, f. 8lv. This news reached Canada on 13 August, 1747.

from La Pointe (Chequamegon) and the Mer de l'Ouest returned to Michilimakinac without incident.¹⁰⁷ They proceeded on to Montreal, carrying news of the outbreak of violence in the west. Other French travellers in the northwest were less fortunate. In July and August, five separate incidents had taken place on Lake Superior, Lake Huron, and Lake Michigan. Three Canadians travelling from Detroit to Michilimakinac were killed at the Odawa village at Saginaw.¹⁰⁸ Two canoes en route from Montreal to the Mer de l'Ouest were attacked by Ojibwas towards La Cloche, near Lake Michigan. One, with eight men in it, was captured. The other escaped by striking out into the lake and jettisoning the cargo. This attack was witnessed by a missionary and a Canadian, who only just escaped themselves.¹⁰⁹ A Canadian was stabbed by an Ojibwa on Grosse Ile.¹¹⁰ On 23 August, a trader arrived at Michilimakinac who had been robbed of forty-four packs of fur and five fusils by the Ojibwas of Kaministiquia. He warned de Noyelle that one hundred Amerindians were assembled to the east of that post to lie in

¹⁰⁷"Extrait en forme de journal," 1747, AC, C11A, vol. 87, NAC, MG 1, microfilm, reel F-87, f. 82.

¹⁰⁸"Extrait en forme de journal," 1747, AC, C11A, vol. 87, NAC, MG 1, microfilm, reel F-87, f. 82; La Galissonnière to Maurepas, 23 October, 1748, NYCD, vol. X, p. 183.

¹⁰⁹"Extrait en forme de journal," 1747, AC, C11A, vol. 87, NAC, MG 1, microfilm, reel F-87, f. 82; Beaujours, "Mémoire de Canada de 1747 [entreprises de Guerre contre les sauvages]," November, 1747, AC, C11A, vol. 87, NAC, MG 1, microfilm, reel F-87, ff. 16-16v.

¹¹⁰An island two leagues north of Michilimakinac. ["Extrait en forme de journal," 1747, AC, C11A, vol. 87, NAC, MG 1, microfilm, reel F-87, f. 82; La Galissonnière to Maurepas, 23 October, 1748, NYCD, vol. X, p. 183].

ambush for the French.¹¹¹ Voyageurs were robbed of their cargoes at Sault Ste. Marie.¹¹² In short, wrote the governor general following these attacks, the French were no longer able to travel in safety in the upper lakes area.¹¹³

3.7 The relief of Michilimakinac, 1747

The normal convoy of the traders for Michilimakinac and the other northern posts had already departed, under the command of Jean-Baptiste Jarret de Verchères,¹¹⁴ when word of the outbreak of violence in the upper lakes arrived. The canoes arrived safely, but not without incident. En route, the convoy had encountered five canoes belonging to the band that had attacked the French off Ile La Cloche. The French gave chase, and the Amerindians turned for shore and fled into the forest, with the voyageurs in hot pursuit. The French smashed all five canoes, but managed to catch only one warrior. Their prisoner proved to be carrying a sack containing goods belonging to deceased Frenchmen and a scalp. When asked just

¹¹¹"Continuation du journal," 1747, AC, C11A, vol. 87, NAC, MG 1, microfilm, reel F-87, ff. 100v-101. The trader was named Philippe Le duc.

¹¹²La Galissonnière to Maurepas, 23 October, 1748, NYCD, vol. X, p. 183.

¹¹³La Galissonnière to Maurepas, 23 October, 1748, NYCD, vol. X, p. 183.

¹¹⁴Antoine Champagne, Les La Vérendrye et le Poste de l'Ouest (Quebec, 1968), p. 349.

where he had happened upon these souvenirs, the prisoner replied that "les gens du fonds du lac luy en avoient fait présent." Subjected to repeated questioning, he consistently denied any involvement in attacks upon the French.

The next day, two canoes bearing an Odawa war party returning from Montreal and the war against New England and New York appeared. The Odawas requested that the prisoner be released, assuring Verchères that he was from a relative of "Koquois chef affectionné aux françois." The confrontation ended peacefully when Verchères released his captive.¹¹⁵

When the convoy reached Michilimakinac, the situation was still tense. On 24 August, De Noyelle was warned that the Ojibwas were preparing to ambush French voyageurs on Lake Superior, "pour empescher qu'il ne sorti aucun francois le printemps prochain."¹¹⁶

Nonetheless, the canoes left as usual for the northern posts, taking the precaution of remaining in company to provide mutual protection until they passed the most dangerous areas.¹¹⁷ And

¹¹⁵"Extrait en forme de journal," 1747, AC, C11A, vol. 87, NAC, MG 1, microfilm, reel F-87, ff. 96v-97.

¹¹⁶"Continuation du journal," 1747, AC, C11A, vol. 87, NAC, MG 1, microfilm, reel F-87, f. 101.

¹¹⁷"Continuation du journal, 1747, AC, C11A, vol. 87, NAC, MG 1, microfilm, reel F-87, f. 101. Verchères continued on to La Baye, where he took over as commandant, and the other canoes proceeded to their respective posts. ["Journal de ce qui s'est passé," AC, C11A, vol. 87, NAC, MG 1, microfilm, reel F-87, f. 175].

unlike Longueuil at Detroit, Noyelles felt sufficiently confident to allow the canoes with the fur from the trading season to return to Montreal, where they arrived safely shortly after 12 September, bearing letters from the commandant reporting that "on y est un peu plus tranquille."¹¹⁸

On 13 August, 1747, Louis-Joseph Gaultier de la Vérendrye,¹¹⁹ an officer who had accompanied his father, Pierre Gaultier de Varennes et de La Vérendrye, on trading and exploration expeditions to Le Mer de l'Ouest, arrived in Canada and reported on the deteriorating situation in the upper lakes area. Beauharnois, who three weeks before, on 20 July, had received word of the attack at Kichaga and the attempted assault on Detroit, was now faced with more trouble in the west. On 15, August, 1747, the Governor-General issued new orders to deal with the changed situation in the north and "pour nous maintenir dans la possession de ce fort."¹²⁰ Slow communications would make many of these orders irrelevant by the time that they were received.

¹¹⁸"Extrait en forme de journal," 1747, AC, C11A, vol. 87, NAC, MG 1, microfilm, reel F-87, f. 92v.

¹¹⁹Antoine Champagne, "Louis-Joseph Gaultier de la Vérendrye," in Frances G. Halpenny, ed., Dictionary of Canadian Biography, volume III, 1741 to 1770 (Toronto, 1974), pp. 241-244. La Vérendrye was returning with the elder Noyelle from the Mer de l'Ouest.

¹²⁰"Extrait en forme de journal," 1747, AC, C11A, vol. 87, NAC, MG 1, microfilm, reel F-87, f. 83.

Verchères, designated commandant of la Baye, was ordered to remain at Michilimakinac and assume command of that post until further orders from Beauharnois.¹²¹ One hundred to one hundred and fifty of the voyageurs who manned the canoes carrying the season's pelts to Montreal, were to remain at Michilimakinac to reinforce the garrison. They were to be allowed to engage in trade, and would be reimbursed for any legitimate claims. If these men lacked sufficient provisions to last until spring, and the if the local Amerindians refused to sell food to the French, "il a ordre de mettre en usage tous les expédiens pour s'en procurer, même par la force des armes."¹²²

La Vérendrye was ordered to carry these dispatches to Michilimakinac, so that Verchères would learn as soon as possible

¹²¹"Extrait en forme de journal," 1747, AC, C11A, vol. 87, NAC, MG 1, microfilm, reel F-87, f. 86. Verchères was to "faire sçavoir seulement aux gens de la Baye, que les affaire n'ont pû luy permettre de les aller voir, que leurs freres luy bouchent le chemin; que les canots qui leur portent des marchandises sont rendus a michilimakinac, et qu'ils y trouveront leurs besoins que les accidens qui viennent d'ariver, ont donc empesché leur pere de leur envoyer des effets, et luy [Verchères] enjoint de ne laisser absolument aller personne dans aucune autre poste que celui de la d. Baye, jusques a ce que les affaire soient tranquilles." Verchères, said Beaujours, "a pareillement bien maintenue les sauvages pendant son sejour [when he was in command of posts in the west] et a été cet hiver avec ses sauvages Conduirer de nos domiciliés convier les nations a d'escendre qui estoient bien tranquille. [Beaujours, "Mémoire de Canada de 1747 [entreprises de Guerre contre les sauvages], November," 1747, AC, C11A, vol. 87, NAC, MG 1, microfilm, reel F-87, f. 17v].

¹²²"Extrait en forme de journal," 1747, AC, C11A, vol. 87, NAC, MG 1, microfilm, reel F-87, f. 83v.

of the Governor-General's orders.¹²³ He arrived safely, and found conditions calm and the Odawas beginning to "se repentir de ce qui s'est passé l'esté dernier."¹²⁴

Moreover, in spite of Beauharnois' orders regarding the seizure of provisions from Amerindians, a convoy of ten canoes was assembled and laden with about fifteen metric tons of flour, wild rice, dried peas, salt pork and salt beef to sustain the augmented garrison. The convoy would be under the command of Jacques Legardeur de Saint-Pierre,¹²⁵ a veteran officer and fur trader, who was to serve as Verchères's deputy, and remain in command at Michilimakinac if Verchères went to La Baye.¹²⁶

St. Pierre and the provision convoy arrived safely at Michilimakinac, probably in mid-October, after a forty-five day

¹²³"Extrait en forme de journal," 1747, AC, C11A, vol. 87, NAC, MG 1, microfilm, reel F-87, ff. 83-84, 86.

¹²⁴"Continuation du journal, 1747, AC, C11A, vol. 87, NAC, MG 1, microfilm, reel F-87, f. 100v.

¹²⁵Donald Chaput, "Jacques Legardeur de Saint-Pierre," in Frances G. Halpenny, ed., Dictionary of Canadian Biography, volume III, 1741 to 1770 (Toronto, 1974), pp. 374-376.

¹²⁶"Extrait en forme de journal," 1747, AC, C11A, vol. 87, NAC, MG 1, microfilm, reel F-87, ff. 83-84, 86. On 28 August, 1747, Beauharnois' successor as Governor-General wrote to Verchères, and informed him that if the dispositions of the Amerindians of La Baye appeared favourable, it was left to his discretion to send St. Pierre there, "afin de sonder leurs intentions et leur porter quelques présents, s'il juge qu'il puisse luy faire entreprendre sans risque et qu'il soit nécessaire pour nous assurer la fidelité de ces sauvages." ["Extrait en forme de journal," 1747, AC, C11A, vol. 87, NAC, MG 1, microfilm, reel F-87, f. 86.]

voyage. He found that Verchères, who was to have remained at Michilimakinac with the voyageurs, had left for La Baye.¹²⁷ The new commandant had planned to meet with the Amerindians of the upper lakes, but most had departed prior to his arrival. They had left:

...sans avoir donné aucun sujet de repentir l'indigne action qu'ils ont commise, que par cette démarche il est a présumer qu'ils persistent toujours dans leurs mauvais sentimens.¹²⁸

He was, however, able to meet with a Potawatomi chief who was travelling to Montreal with the fur convoy. He congratulated the Amerindian for the good conduct of his nation.¹²⁹

St. Pierre was apparently somewhat nonplussed by the departure of the traders, and reported that Beauharnois' orders (delivered by La Vérendrye), had been badly executed. He felt that withholding trade goods from the Amerindians:

...estoit l'un [sic] moyen de réduire ces nations, qu'il ne prévoit pas qu'on puisse y reussir qu'en les privant des secours, qu'ils tirent pour la subsistance de leurs familles et desquels ils ne peuvent se passer. Ce qui seroit arrivé si l'on se fut opposé au départ des commerçans pour les differens [sic] postes suivant les

¹²⁷"Journal de ce qui s'est passé," AC, C11A, vol. 87, NAC, MG 1, microfilm, reel F-87, ff. 175v-176.

¹²⁸"Journal de ce qui s'est passé," AC, C11A, vol. 87, NAC, MG 1, microfilm, reel F-87, f. 175.

¹²⁹St. Pierre also warned the Potawatomi leader against the machinations of the French in the Illinois, asking him to "ne point abandonner leur village, ayant esté informé que M. de Bertet [sic], Commandant aux illinois mettoit tout en usage pour les attirer, ce que seroit très préjudiciable au bien du service." ["Journal de ce qui s'est passé," AC, C11A, vol. 87, NAC, MG 1, microfilm, reel F-87, ff. 175v-176].

intentions de M. le Marquis de Beauharnois."¹³⁰

He recommended to Beauharnois that the trade canoes not be permitted to leave Montreal in the spring of 1748 until he had an opportunity to ascertain the intentions of the northern Amerindians.¹³¹

3.8 Conclusions

The most important events in the west in 1747 were not the sporadic attacks on the French by Amerindians or their intensive and largely successful diplomatic efforts, but the failures of the attacks on Detroit, Michilimakinac, and Niagara. The fall of any one of these posts would have been a heavy, perhaps decisive, blow against the French presence in the west. Bands and individuals who had remained on the sidelines might have joined in operations against the French. The New Yorkers might have been sufficiently motivated to overcome their political paralysis and send matériel, soldiers and artillery to assist the Amerindians. The French, so short of manpower that they had delayed the fur brigades against the possibility that the voyageurs would be needed as fighters, would

¹³⁰"Journal de ce qui s'est passé," AC, C11A, vol. 87, NAC, MG 1, microfilm, reel F-87, ff. 175-176.

¹³¹"Journal de ce qui s'est passé," AC, C11A, vol. 87, NAC, MG 1, microfilm, reel F-87, ff. 175-175v.

only with the greatest difficulty have found the resources needed to fight their way back into the west. Instead, the coalition would henceforth be limited to diplomatic actions, and minor attacks on isolated targets, which could and did alarm the French, but could not seriously threaten their position in the west.

Although the French remained on the defensive for several months, and in a state of great alarm, the coalition had lost the initiative in the Great Lakes area, as the result of its failure to capture a major post. With the French on their guard, an attack without artillery was virtually impossible. The French might lose smaller outposts, but as long as they held Niagara, Detroit, and Michilimakinac, they held the key points of the pays d'en haut, and could remain in safety within their walls until conditions improved. More than anything else, the possession of large fortified outposts that could not be taken without artillery saved the French presence in the west in 1747.

The events of 1747 demonstrated the limits of Amerindian military action against the French. Once their attempted surprise attacks on Detroit and Michilimakinac had failed, they lacked the means to attack the French in their strongholds. Nor were they able to employ the tactics that would be used by Pontiac in 1763, and enforce a close blockade of Detroit over a period of months and attempt to disrupt the movement of convoys to and from the west. This would have been one measure that was within their power that

might have severely harmed the French. Although the fur trade in the south was somewhat interrupted, in the upper lakes it continued more or less as usual. All their efforts in the spring and summer of 1747 produced only one tangible success, the temporary abandonment by the French of Fort des Miamis.

The French, on the other hand, had been able to do little to improve their position in the west. They could not persuade their allies to fight for them against fellow tribesmen or deploy sufficient force to compel the Amerindians of the Great Lakes to cease their attacks. The routine resupply of the western posts was effected only with difficulty. And as Frenchmen were being hunted down and killed from Kichaga on Lake Erie to Kaministiquia on Lake Superior, the French military response consisted of the destruction of five canoes and capture of a single prisoner, who was released within a day.

In the summer of 1747, the coalition had unleashed a series of widespread but minor attacks on the French. Their effect was more psychological than physical, as they never seriously threatened the French position in the west. Nor were the French able to control events in the west. With the possibilities for the successful use of violence thus exhausted, the initiative would henceforth lie with the leaders of the faction among the Three Fires and their allies who sought to restore the Franco-Amerindian alliance and peace and tranquillity in the west.

Chapter 4:
Three Fires Peacemaking, 1747-1748

4.1 Steps towards peace

Just as the outbreak of violence in the west was initiated by Amerindians, it came to an end as the result of their efforts. Indeed, attacks on the French had hardly begun before some Amerindians began taking steps to restore the status quo ante in the west. By the end of the summer of 1747, the coalition had failed to achieve major military success and peacemaking had begun in earnest, as the powerful pro-French element of the Three Fires Confederacy, hitherto neutral, swung into action. Their participation in the anti-French coalition might well have tipped the balance against the French. Their neutrality in the spring and summer of 1747 had given that coalition an opportunity to win a victory if they could. Now, their intervention led to the restoration of peace in the Great Lakes region and the renewal of the Franco-Amerindian alliance.

Even as parties of Western Amerindians terrorized the French in the west other warriors continued to fight alongside their French allies against the New York and New England in the central theatre. When news of the troubles in the west arrived, they immediately expressed the desire, not to take up arms against fellow tribesmen, but to negotiate with the coalition on behalf of the French. In the late summer of 1747:

...de tous les sauvages qui s'en retournant, il y en a quantité es bien fidel qui sont fort pressé d'arriver chez eux pour travailler comme icy aux bonnes affaires.¹

The most prominent of these were the Potawatomis of the St. Joseph River. When, by 23 August, warriors from this tribe first learned of events in the west, their words, if not necessarily their subsequent actions, were all that Beauharnois could have hoped for:

Leur premier harangment porta avec force pour nous convaincre de sa fidelité et de son attachment pour les français avec lesquels il veut plutôt mourir que de les abandonner jamais.²

On 1 September, Pindal8n, a prominent Odawa chief, who had fought against the French during the Fox War, but "constamment depuis dévoué à Ononthio, célèbre par son esprit, sa sagacité, et ses conversations avec Mr. de la Galissonnière,"³ together with nine Odawas and an Ojibwa of Michilimakinac, arrived at Quebec to meet with Beauharnois. When informed of the state of affairs at Michilimakinac:

Ils en ont parû très surpris et nous ont fait entendre que c'estoit le principal motif qui les engageoit a se rendre promptement chez eux pour travailler a retablir

¹"Extrait en forme de journal," 1747, AC, C11A, vol. 87, NAC, MG 1, microfilm, reel F-87, f. 87.

²Beaucours, "Mémoire de Canada de 1747 [entreprises de Guerre contre les sauvages]," November, 1747, AC, C11A, vol. 87, NAC, MG 1, microfilm, reel F-87, f. 17v. They "demandent a s'en retourner pour rompre et détourner les mauvaises insinuations qu'on pouvoit faire a leurs gens ou leurs alliés. Ils regardent les mauvais coups des 8ta8as et des sauteurs comme s'ils avoient esté faits contre eux, se disant bons françois et demandent un commandant." ["Extrait en forme de journal," 1747, AC, C11A, vol. 87, NAC, MG 1, microfilm, reel F-87, f. 87].

³Bougainville, "Journal," p. 283.

toutes choses. Nous les avons bien traitté.⁴

The party left for Montreal, but Pindal⁸ⁿ remained at Quebec to await arrival of the convoy carrying Beauharnois' successor, Roland Michel Barrin de la Galissonnière, Marquis de la Galissonnière.⁵ He was thus present on 19 September, when the Northumberland carrying La Galissonnière arrived and the new governor general disembarked at 4:00 p.m. The Odawa leader visited the Northumberland and remained on board for three days, during which he was treated with great consideration.⁶ More than this hospitality, the arrival of a formidable squadron of warships provided a tangible indication of the resilience of French power, and must have somewhat reduced the credibility of British claims to command the approaches to New France.

4.2 The arrival of La Galissonnière

La Galissonnière, a naval officer who would have preferred to serve at sea, but compelled to assume a colonial governorship, lacked Beauharnois' long experience in dealing with Amerindians. A month after his arrival, the new governor general reported on the

⁴"Extrait en forme de journal," 1747, AC, C11A, vol. 87, NAC, MG 1, microfilm, reel F-87, f. 88v.

⁵Etienne Taillemite, "Roland Michel Barrin de la Galissonnière, Marquis de la Galissonnière," in Frances G. Halpenny, ed., Dictionary of Canadian Biography, volume III, 1741 to 1770 (Toronto, 1974), pp. 26-32.

⁶"Extrait en forme de journal," 1747, AC, C11A, vol. 87, NAC, MG 1, microfilm, reel F-87, f. 95.

situation in the west. He blamed British diplomacy, the Iroquois, the Ojibwas, and above all, the shortage of trade goods at the western posts. He hoped that the safe arrival of convoys at Michilimackinac and Detroit would restore tranquility in the west.⁷

He did not allow his recent arrival to deter him from assembling a comprehensive if ruthless programme for 1749 and future decades, which was intended in the short term to reduce the western allies to due subordination and in the long term to place the French presence in the west on firmer footing so that it would no longer be vulnerable to dislodgement by Amerindians.

His immediate concern was to stabilize the situation in the west, which he proposed to effect by military means. He opined:

Je crois que je seray en etat ce printemps de faire frapper un grand coup sur la nation des Saulteurs qu'on ne peut reduire que par un châtement eclatant qui, a ce que j'espere, les soumettra et intimidera les autres.

In the long run, he suggested that increasing the European population of Detroit would make the western posts self-sufficient and able to defend themselves. In his opinion, this was the only means by which the Anglo-Americans could be prevented from establishing themselves solidly in the Ohio valley and thereby becoming a threat to the continued survival of New France.⁸

⁷La Galissonnière to Maurepas, 22 October, 1747, AC, C11A, vol. 87, NAC, MG 1, microfilm, reel F-87, ff. 260-260v.

⁸La Galissonnière to Maurepas, 22 October, 1747, AC, C11A, vol. 87, NAC, MG 1, microfilm, reel F-87, ff. 260v-261.

In retrospect it would seem that both these proposals were questionable. An expanding European population in Amerindian territory would have led to competition for access to land and thus significantly decreased that convergence of French and Amerindian interests that was the foundation of the Franco-Amerindian alliance. As the Ojibwas were one of the nations of the Three Fires confederacy, an attack upon this nation would have shattered the Franco-Amerindian alliance completely. La Galissonnière suggested in effect that the French should replace an alliance bound together by mutual interest with a relationship based on superior force.

Yet if La Galissonnière's suggestions of striking a major blow against an Amerindian nation that opposed the French and a substantial increase of the French presence in the west were unrealistic in the context of the fall of 1747 they were largely implemented by subsequent governors in following years. The following decade was to see an attack by pro-French Odawas from Michilimakinac against La Demoiselle's band of Miamis at Pickawillany and the occupation in force of the Ohio valley by the French in such strength that they felt able to ignore the wishes and sensibilities of the native population.⁹

⁹As well, in 1749 and 1750, a number of habitant families were settled at Detroit. [La Jonquière and Bigot to Maurepas, 28 September, 1749, AC, C11A, vol. 93, NAC, MG 1, microfilm, reel F-93, ff. 31-31v; La Jonquière and Bigot to Maurepas, 1750, AC, C11A, vol. 95, NAC, MG 1, microfilm, reel F-95, f. 3].

4.3 Detroit: fall 1747-winter 1747-1748

At the same time as leaders of the war parties were returning home the leaders of the Three Fires who had remained at home were seeking to bring an end to tension and apprehended violence in the Great Lakes region, where the situation remained tense but stable.

Longueuil sent four Wyandot delegations to Sandusky, but without success, and suspected that the Wyandot were dragging out negotiations in the hope of being able to surprise Detroit and to gain time to arrange a refuge in case of failure.¹⁰

In the fall of 1747, two leading chiefs, Mikinak of the Odawas of Detroit and Onanguissé¹¹ of the Potawatomis of the St. Joseph River, gave Longueuil a message and one envoy from each nation for the governor general. The delegates left Detroit about 2 November, 1747, arrived at Montreal on 3 December, and spoke to La Galissonnière on 7 December.¹² Mikinac, on behalf of the Odawas, offered to mediate between the French and Wyandots of Sandusky. He promised to accomplish this by means of:

les colliers qu'il enverra dans le cours de l'hiver a
tous les chefs de cette nation, de faire rentrer les

¹⁰"Journal de ce qui s'est passé," AC, C11A, vol. 87, NAC, MG 1, microfilm, reel F-87, f. 184.

¹¹Donald J. Horton, "Ounanguissé," in David M. Hayne, Dictionary of Canadian Biography, volume II, 1701 to 1740 (Toronto, 1969), p. 504. This chief was the son of the subject of this biography, who was a chief of the Potawatomi of St. Joseph River.

¹²"Journal de ce qui s'est passé," AC, C11A, vol. 87, NAC, MG 1, microfilm, reel F-87, ff. 184-185, 186v.

coupables dans leur devoirs et les déterminer à demander grace.¹³

Together, the two emissaries requested the dispatch to Detroit in the course of the winter of one hundred Canadians and Amerindians who were not allied to the Detroit bands, to be followed by another hundred in the spring, and well provided with food and munitions. This force would be used to reduce the Wyandots should they "vouloir persister dans ses mauvaises intentions." The delegates carefully refrained, however, from offering to act against the Wyandots themselves, in the event that Orontony's band opposed "cette tranquillité que les deux nations désirent." They suggested, in other words, that the French solve their own problems, and not involve the Three Fires in a blood feud with their neighbours.¹⁴

¹³"Journal de ce qui s'est passé," AC, C11A, vol. 87, NAC, MG 1, microfilm, reel F-87, f. 185. Longueuil, appended a note to his report stating that Mikinac on his own behalf, requested a scarlet coat with silver facings, similar to that which had been sent to Kinousaki, a fine shirt and a sword with a silver hilt. Longueuil "nous prie d'accorder cette demande dont ce chef sera content et ajoute qu'il a besoin de cette homme dans la conjoncture présente, et que le refus qu'on pourroit luy faire causeroit peut estre un grand renversement, que ce chef désire qu'on luy envoie ces présents cet hiver pour estre en estat de s'en parer a l'arrivée des nations au printemps et faire connoitre par la qu'il n'est par moins aimé que Kinousaki." ["Journal de ce qui s'est passé," AC, C11A, vol. 87, NAC, MG 1, microfilm, reel F-87, f. 185v.] Orders were given at Montreal to have the two delegates carry back the presents which Mikinac had demanded: "Nous n'avons pû nous dispenser d'accorder a ce chef cette marque de distinction pour eviter toute jalousie, vû que les autres chefs et principeaux de sa nation qui sont venu a quebec l'esté der ont esté également bien traités." ["Journal de ce qui s'est passé," AC, C11A, vol. 87, NAC, MG 1, microfilm, reel F-87, ff. 186v, 188.]

¹⁴"Journal de ce qui s'est passé," AC, C11A, vol. 87, NAC, MG 1, microfilm, reel F-87, f. 185. On 21 december, 1747, La Galissonnière met once again with the delegates, and informed them that although it would not be possible to send a large detachment to Detroit in the winter, but that a large and well escorted convoy

The presence of the emissaries of Onguissé and Mikinac in Quebec was indicative of a major change in attitude on the part of the hitherto neutral pro-French elements among the Three Fires. In the late summer and fall of 1747, they shifted from passivity to active involvement in the turmoil in the west. Their chosen role, however, was not that of warriors throwing their weight to one side or the other, but peacemakers, seeking a negotiated resolution of the conflict.

Longueuil was able to report that, according to all appearances, the Odawas and Potawatomis "travaillent sincèrement a la paix et semblent déterminent a y contraindre ceux qui y apporteront empeschement."¹⁵ If, as had been suggested, they had played a part in the conspiracy of the spring of 1747,¹⁶ it remained true that they had not participated actively. To demonstrate their good will, they now declared themselves "ennemi de ceux qui ont brouillé la terre, de façon cependant qu'ils s'offrent pour médiateurs du rétablissement des plus coupables," but did not go so far as to declare war on the Wyandots, "a cause des suites que cela pourroit

would depart in the spring. ["Journal de ce qui s'est passé," AC, C11A, vol. 87, NAC, MG 1, microfilm, reel F-87, ff. 186v, 188.]

¹⁵"Journal de ce qui s'est passé," AC, C11A, vol. 87, NAC, MG 1, microfilm, reel F-87, f. 191.

¹⁶Many of those Odawa who had joined with the coalition had travelled to Sandusky to join Orontony's Wyandots. "Journal de ce qui s'est passé," AC, C11A, vol. 87, NAC, MG 1, microfilm, reel F-87, f. 204.

avoir."¹⁷

This firm declaration in favour of peace, was believed by the French to have been decisive. When:

all those who were not compromised, [of the Odawas and Ojibwas], joined the Potawatomis, the French, and the well-disposed Odawas; ... this return so intimidated the assassins, that they came to supplicate for mercy.¹⁸

In the fall of 1747, three Wyandot leaders, including Orontony himself, travelled to Detroit where Orontony "demandoit la paix."¹⁹ Longueuil was able to begin to negotiate a peace.²⁰ The Wyandot were to return from Sandusky to Detroit,²¹ and to capture two British prisoners for each Frenchman that had been killed.²² The

¹⁷This declaration was made at some time between 2 November, 1747 and 29 February, 1748. ["Journal de ce qui s'est passé," AC, C11A, vol. 87, NAC, MG 1, microfilm, reel F-87, f. 191.

¹⁸La Galissonnière to Maurepas, 23 October, 1748, NYCD, vol. X, p. 182.

¹⁹"Journal de ce qui s'est passé," AC, C11A, vol. 87, NAC, MG 1, microfilm, reel F-87, f. 198.

²⁰La Galissonnière's account described the Wyandot as coming to Detroit to "supplicate for mercy." [La Galissonnière to Maurepas, 23 October, 1748, NYCD, vol. X, p. 182]. Note the in Longueuil's account of events, the Wyandot "demandoit la paix" while in La Galissonnière's they "supplicate for mercy.

²¹"Journal de ce qui s'est passé," AC, C11A, vol. 87, NAC, MG 1, microfilm, reel F-87, f. 198v.

²²This detail is taken from the orders sent by La Galissonnière to Michilimakinac in the spring of 1748, which authorized the commandant of that post "d'accorder la paix aux meme conditions faites aux hurons du Détroit, que estoit d'ammene[r] deux prisonniers anglois pour chaque françois qui avoit esté tué, il faut avant tout que les promesses soient effectuées afin que ces nations n[e] nous trahissent pas comme ont fait les hurons."

negotiations were well underway when a war party attacked the French at the mouth of the Detroit River.²³

A party of five warriors, guided by a Wyandot from Detroit, led by a warrior who had been adopted into the Onondaga, together with a Seneca and two Delawares had placed themselves at the mouth of the Detroit river. The war party had sighted three Frenchmen in a canoe off La Grosse Ile, waited until they drew near, then opened fire. The French, taken by surprise were all lightly wounded, but managed to save themselves by paddling out into the river, and made their way to Detroit.

Upon receipt of this news, Longueuil sent out a detachment of thirty men under Belestre, to seek out the assailants. The Wyandot delegates informed Longueuil that the raiders were in a cabin on Ile aux Bois Blanc, just east of the southern tip of La Grosse Ile, and offered to arrest them themselves.²⁴

Longueuil accepted this offer, and sent them together with ten Canadian to join Belestre. The five raiders surrendered without

["Journal de ce qui s'est passé," AC, C11A, vol. 87, NAC, MG 1, microfilm, reel F-87, f. 210v].

²³La Galissonnière to Maurepas, 23 October, 1748, NYCD, vol. X, p. 182.

²⁴According to Longueuil, they did so, "craignant qu'ils n'y eût de leurs gens confondus parmy ces cinq guerriers," ["Journal de ce qui s'est passé," AC, C11A, vol. 87, NAC, MG 1, microfilm, reel F-87, ff. 190v-191].

resistance and were brought to Detroit. As they disembarked, the Onondaga leader "fut tué par la populace irrités contre ces traîtres." The remaining four were put in irons and imprisoned.²⁵

This incident marks the only effective French response by force to attacks in the west during the entire war. It is notable that they were successful only through the active cooperation of the Wyandot delegates. There was, however, a price to be paid for even this small success. On 20 December, 1748, two Wyandot deputed by the elders at Sandusky, arrived at Detroit and informed Longueuil that the news that the French were holding four of their warriors had produced considerable anger among their compatriots, who were contemplating revenge.²⁶

Two war parties subsequently set out for Detroit and Fort des Miamis. Were they unable to find a Frenchmen, they resolved to attack whomever they encountered, as they believed that the Odawas and Wyandots had contributed to the capture of their warriors. News of this new danger caused Orontony and the Wyandots to seek the

²⁵Longueuil "a fait avertir que la destinée de ces quatre prisonniers dépendoit de la conduite de leurs nations." ["Journal de ce qui s'est passé," AC, C11A, vol. 87, NAC, MG 1, microfilm, reel F-87, ff. 190v-191]. See also La Galissonnière to Maurepas, 23 October, 1748, NYCD, vol. X, p. 182. In January of 1748, one of the Senecas stabbed himself with the knife belonging to a French sergeant. The French suspected that this killing may have been the result of suicide pact, to avoid a more painful death, or part of an escape attempt. ["Journal de ce qui s'est passé," AC, C11A, vol. 87, NAC, MG 1, microfilm, reel F-87, ff. 193-193v.

²⁶"Journal de ce qui s'est passé," AC, C11A, vol. 87, NAC, MG 1, microfilm, reel F-87, f. 192.

greater safety of the White River.²⁷ It was at Fort des Miamis, however, that the blow fell, and one Frenchman was killed.²⁸

In the meantime, the fate of the prisoners remained a concern. Towards the end of January, fourteen Wyandot from Sandusky came to Detroit to demand the freedom of the three surviving prisoners. The request was "accompagnée de tant de belles promesses" that Longueuil, with great reluctance, released the three prisoners, "de l'avis des principaux françois et sauvages qui estoient dans le fort."²⁹

In spite of the peace negotiated at Detroit in the fall of 1747, the conduct of the Wyandot at Sandusky remained equivocal in the eyes of the French. Traders from Philadelphia continued to find a welcome there. More seriously, the scalp of the Frenchman who had been killed at Fort des Miamis had been sent to Philadelphia, and the French suspected that the offer of peace from Orontony had been a deception.³⁰

²⁷"Journal de ce qui s'est passé," AC, C11A, vol. 87, NAC, MG 1, microfilm, reel F-87, f. 192.

²⁸The identity of the killers remained uncertain. See "Journal de ce qui s'est passé," AC, C11A, vol. 87, NAC, MG 1, microfilm, reel F-87, f. 198; La Galissonnière to la Naudière [aux Miamis], 9 November, 1748, MG 24, L3, Baby Collection, vol. 1, Correspondence, 1745-1749, p. 1154.

²⁹"Journal de ce qui s'est passé," AC, C11A, vol. 87, NAC, MG 1, microfilm, reel F-87, f. 198.

³⁰"Journal de ce qui s'est passé," AC, C11A, vol. 87, NAC, MG 1, microfilm, reel F-87, f. 198.

Their ability to threaten the French, however, had been reduced by the willingness of the Three Fires to intervene on behalf of peace. The Wyandot of Sandusky might continue to reject French overtures, but Mikinac was assembling warriors of the Ojibwas of Detroit, the Odawas "des trois bandes" and the Potawatomis. He proposed to "aller sommer nicolas [Orontony] de sa parole [to keep his word] et de luy déclarer la guerre en cas de refus."³¹

In the event, the Wyandot neither submitted nor fought. In the spring of 1748, the elderly Kinousaki of the Odawas of the Detroit, travelled to Sandusky to negotiate with Orontony and his band. Upon his arrival, he found that Orontony with 119 men, women, and children had burned their village and gone to the White River.³² He also encountered some Odawas of Detroit who had been involved with the coalition, and had moved to the Miami River. These Odawas were unreceptive to Kinousaki, and only part of them were willing to return to Detroit. The remainder preferred to take up residence along the lower Miami River, where, they had been promised by the Wyandots, British traders would provide them with trade goods. He suggested, however, that when the Odawas learned that the Wyandots had left Sandusky, they would change their minds.³³

³¹"Journal de ce qui s'est passé," AC, C11A, vol. 87, NAC, MG 1, microfilm, reel F-87, f. 198v.

³²"Journal de ce qui s'est passé," AC, C11A, vol. 87, NAC, MG 1, microfilm, reel F-87, ff. 204-204v.

³³"Journal de ce qui s'est passé," AC, C11A, vol. 87, NAC, MG 1, microfilm, reel F-87, f. 204.

At the same time as Kinousaki's return on 7 April, there arrived two Wyandots who had been sent on behalf of pro-French Wyandots of Detroit to Lake Erie, who confirmed that Orontony and his band had gone to the White River, and added that Orontony planned to seek refuge with the Iroquois of the White River or the Mahicans near Albany.³⁴ In September of 1748, one hundred Wyandot warriors and their families were received as allies by the Iroquois and Pennsylvania.³⁵ Their departure from Lake Erie significantly reduced the danger posed by that band to the French.

The other major centre of anti-French activity was at Fort des Miamis. The anti-French faction among the Miamis had achieved the most tangible success of any of the bands involved in the coalition, when they had captured, pillaged and burned Fort des Miamis and taken the French traders prisoner. In the fall of 1747, the Miamis sent a principal chief to Detroit to meet with Longueuil and request that French traders be sent to their village with the trade goods that they could not do without. In return, they promised the commandant that conditions on the upper Miami River would soon return to normal.³⁶

³⁴"Journal de ce qui s'est passé," AC, C11A, vol. 87, NAC, MG 1, microfilm, reel F-87, ff. 204-204v. Longueuil added that the scalps of the Frenchmen who were killed by Orontony had been sent to the Mahicans.

³⁵"Journal of Conrad Weiser Esqr., Indian Interpreter to Ohio," Minutes of the Provincial Council of Pennsylvania, 15 October, 1748, pp. 352-358.

³⁶"Journal de ce qui s'est passé," AC, C11A, vol. 87, NAC, MG 1, microfilm, reel F-87, ff. 190-190v.

Longueuil believed that the pro-French faction³⁷ among the Miamis was the larger.³⁸ He was therefore willing to accede to their requests, in order to deny the trade of the Miamis to the Pennsylvanians.³⁹ Prior to the onset of winter, one Ensign Dubuisson was accordingly sent with thirty men to build a small post.⁴⁰ Longueuil recommended, however, that they not carry too much matériel, since, trade goods "dans les circonstances pouvoient servir d'objet de pillage aux sauvages mal intentionnés."⁴¹

Dubuisson and his party endured a difficult winter, as they met with considerable unfriendliness from some Miamis. Nonetheless, he managed to hold out until the spring, and continued negotiations with the leaders of the anti-French faction.⁴² By February, Dubuisson was able to report that "la mauvaise bande" led by La Demoiselle, had resolved "de rentrer dans son devoir" and was already en route to Detroit when they received a delegation, said

³⁷Members of the pro-French faction among the Miamis had accepted their share of the plunder from the fort, but subsequently returned it to the French.

³⁸La Galissonnière to Maurepas, 23 October, 1748, NYCD, vol. X, p. 181.

³⁹"Journal de ce qui s'est passé," AC, C11A, vol. 87, NAC, MG 1, microfilm, reel F-87, ff. 190-190v.

⁴⁰"Journal de ce qui s'est passé," AC, C11A, vol. 87, NAC, MG 1, microfilm, reel F-87, ff. 190-190v.

⁴¹"Journal de ce qui s'est passé," AC, C11A, vol. 87, NAC, MG 1, microfilm, reel F-87, ff. 190-190v.

⁴²La Galissonnière to Maurepas, 23 October, 1748, NYCD, vol. X, p. 181.

to be from the Shawnees, who dissuaded the anti-French Miamis from reconciling with the French.⁴³

By February of 1748, one member of the garrison had been killed at the very gate of the fort. The French were unable to induce the Miamis to pursue the assailants.⁴⁴ Dubuisson returned to Detroit in the spring, bringing with him that part of the plunder from the previous fort that had been returned by the pro-French faction.⁴⁵

The ultimate alignment of the Miamis with regard to the British and French was, like that of the Wyandots, resolved by fission rather than negotiation. Part of that nation remained in contact with the French, while the remainder relocated southward and entered into formal alliance with Pennsylvania.⁴⁶

The Mississauga are frequently mentioned as being formally allied with the British of New York against the French, yet no specific violent actions by them are recorded. Like the Wyandots and Miamis, that nation was evidently divided. In April, the commandant of

⁴³"Journal de ce qui s'est passé," AC, C11A, vol. 87, NAC, MG 1, microfilm, reel F-87, f. 198v.

⁴⁴La Galissonnière to Maurepas, 23 October, 1748, NYCD, vol. X, p. 181.

⁴⁵La Galissonnière to Maurepas, 23 October, 1748, NYCD, vol. X, pp. 181-182.

⁴⁶Minutes of the Provincial Council of Pennsylvania, 18 June, 1748; 22 July, 1748, pp. 289-290, 316-319.

Niagara reported that he had been informed by pro-French Mississaugas that they had prevented an outbreak of overt anti-French activity among their nation.⁴⁷ After the war, New Yorkers considered the Mississauga to be their allies, and continued to provide them, together with the other western nations who traded at Oswego, with munitions and supplies.⁴⁸

With calm returning to Franco-Amerindian relations in the west, a major conference was held at Detroit towards the end of April, 1748. Present were representatives of the Odawas of Grand River and Saginaw, Potawatomis from St. Joseph, Kickapoos, Mascoutens, Ojibwas "de la contré," together with the Odawas, Potawatomis, Ojibwas and Wyandots of Detroit. Somewhat less welcome were persons believed to be spies from "la mauvaise bande des Miamis" and

⁴⁷"Journal de ce qui s'est passé," AC, C11A, vol. 87, NAC, MG 1, microfilm, reel F-87, ff. 198v-199. The commandant was "trés content" with the "Chef du petit rapide," who had "averti [the commandant] qu'il estoit chargé de mauvais colliers par l'anglois pour les faire passer a sandoské. Ce chef est neantmoins soupçonné d'avoir envoyé ces colliers a leur destination dans le temps qu'il avoit promis de les renvoyer aux anglois, on tâchera d'aprofondir le fait." ["Journal de ce qui s'est passé," AC, C11A, vol. 87, NAC, MG 1, microfilm, reel F-87, f. 199].

⁴⁸The Governor of New York reported in 1749 that "I have now sent the indian interpreter with a considerable quantity of provision & ammunition to meet the misissique Indians at oswego to encourage them in their confidence of their being supported against the intrigues of the French in the trading with his majesty's subjects." [Clinton to the Lords of Trade 3 June, 1749, NYCD, vol. VI, p. 486.

emissaries from Orontony and the Shawnees of the Scioto.⁴⁹

The general council began on 28 April, 1748. The Amerindians present "ont tous juré ... fidélité et obéissance et ont promis que le premier party qui insulteroit le françois seroit regardé comme l'ennemi commun." This reaffirmation of the alliance "a paru estre accepté de bon coeur et avec sincérité et résolution d'aller faire ratifier les accords" with La Galissonnière. The Odawas of Saginaw reported that the members of their band that had taken part in the killing of Frenchmen in 1747 were to be taken by their chief to Quebec, and handed over to the governor general.⁵⁰ The Ojibwas "de la contré" were described by the French as coming to Detroit "pour se soumettre a la volonté de leur pere."⁵¹ Longueuil expected that Orontony and the Wyandots (who were by then known to have left their village) would quickly be informed of these developments by their agents in the Detroit area, and predicted that "cela ne pourra que faire un bon effet."⁵²

As negotiations proceeded in the west, the French prepared the

⁴⁹"Journal de ce qui s'est passé," AC, C11A, vol. 87, NAC, MG 1, microfilm, reel F-87, ff. 204-205.

⁵⁰"Journal de ce qui s'est passé," AC, C11A, vol. 87, NAC, MG 1, microfilm, reel F-87, f. 204.

⁵¹"Journal de ce qui s'est passé," AC, C11A, vol. 87, NAC, MG 1, microfilm, reel F-87, f. 205.

⁵²"Journal de ce qui s'est passé," AC, C11A, vol. 87, NAC, MG 1, microfilm, reel F-87, f. 205v.

convoy for Detroit. On 27 May, this convoy departed from Lachine under the command of Pierre-Joseph Céloron de Blainville, an officer of the colonial regulars who had served as commandant at Michilimakinac and Detroit.⁵³ Captain Céloron, with a strong escort, and carrying large quantities of provisions, munitions and merchandise.⁵⁴ They carried with them orders for Longueuil from the governor general. The commandant was informed that the words and actions of Orontony were too suspicious to be relied upon and that he should not release the three prisoners taken at Ile aux Bois Blanc, until their tribes met suitable conditions that had been agreed upon. He was not to "pardon" the Mississaugas and Ojibwas from above Detroit until they had submitted and the killers of Frenchmen had been surrendered. Rather undiplomatically, La Galissonnière further suggested that any Wyandot or "autres rebelles" who entered the fort without a safe conduct were to be killed immediately.⁵⁵

⁵³W.J. Eccles, "Pierre-Joseph Céloron de Blainville," in Frances G. Halpenny, ed., Dictionary of Canadian Biography, volume III, 1741 to 1770 (Toronto, 1974), pp. 99-101.

⁵⁴"Journal de ce qui s'est passé," AC, C11A, vol. 87, NAC, MG 1, microfilm, reel F-87, ff. 201v, 202v-203.

⁵⁵"il conviendrait de s'en saisir et de luy faire casser la teste sur le champ, pourvû qu'il n'y eût point de trahison, mais que cela s'exécutera comme un simple acte de justice et de vengeance permise." ["Journal de ce qui s'est passé," AC, C11A, vol. 87, NAC, MG 1, microfilm, reel F-87, f. 203v]. Longueuil was authorized to retain as many men from the convoy as he needed, and ordered to allow the trade of as little powder as possible to "les sauvages suspects." The convoy also carried presents for Le Pied Froid, of the Miamis, "qui paroît affidé," and for the Shawnees. ["Journal de ce qui s'est passé," 1748, AC, C11A, vol. 87, NAC, MG 1, microfilm, reel F-87, ff. 203v-204].

On 5 September, Céloron arrived at Quebec after commanding the

4.4 Michilimakinac, 1748

In February, 1748, representatives of the Odawas of Saginaw and the Ojibwas of Michilimakinac came to Detroit "pour demander graces pour ceux de leurs nations qui ont tué les françois dans ces deux postes." Longueuil suggested that they speak to the commandant at Michilimakinac, to which they agreed.⁵⁶ If Longueuil at Detroit was pursuing a policy of realistic accommodation, and following the advice of the Canadians and Amerindians of that post, somewhat contrary to the will of the governor general, St. Pierre, the new commandant at Michilimakinac was following La Galissonnière's orders to the letter. Following his arrival, St. Pierre had held back all of the traders that had not yet left for their posts, and responded to Amerindian delegations by threatening to prevent French traders from travelling to their territories if they did not turn over band members who had taken part in attacks on Frenchmen, and return any plunder which they had acquired.⁵⁷

return of the convoy from Detroit to Montreal. Reports from the west then suggested that the Wyandots of Detroit were probably still in contact with Oronotony, and "ils pouroient aisement luy donner des avis si on faisoit quelqu'entreprise contre ce traître. Il paroît qu'il n'y a guère a douter que les Chaßenons [Shawnees] ne se soient ligués avec l'anglois." ["Journal de ce qui s'est passé," AC, C11A, vol. 87, NAC, MG 1, microfilm, reel F-87, f. 223v].

⁵⁶"Journal de ce qui s'est passé," AC, C11A, vol. 87, NAC, MG 1, microfilm, reel F-87, ff. 197v-198.

⁵⁷La Galissonnière to Maurepas, 23 October, 1748, NYCD, vol. X, p. 183. La Galissonnière had been planning to follow an even tougher policy in the west, "voulant punir celles des nations de Michilimakinac et du Detroit qui ... avoient fait des courses sur les françois, a envoyé l'année dernière de forts detachmens dans ces deux postes. Mais avant l'arrivée de celui destiné pour Michilimakinac, les Sauvages dont on avoit a se plaindre etoient

Once again, the Amerindians acted before the French. Amerindians from Saginaw brought in one person alleged to have killed a Frenchman, those of Michilimakinac handed over another. Two hostages were surrendered, in lieu of other alleged killers who had fled from Saginaw. Restitution was made for some of the goods stolen from the victims, and arrangements made to pay for the rest.⁵⁸ The prisoners and hostages were taken to Montreal by members of their own bands, who were accompanied by a French officer.⁵⁹

When orders from La Galissonnière arrived with the fur brigade, St. Pierre was authorized to decide whether or not to allow the canoes to proceed westward.⁶⁰ But in the summer of 1748 conditions were

venu demander grace au Commandant du Poste et lui avoies livré les deux principaux chefs du parti revolté." ["Canada: Sauvages," 15 April, 1749, AC, C11A, vol. 94, NAC, MG 1, microfilm, reel F-94, ff. 73-74.]

⁵⁸La Galissonnière to Maurepas, 23 October, 1748, NYCD, vol. X, p. 183.

⁵⁹La Galissonnière to Maurepas, 23 October, 1748, NYCD, vol. X, p. 183.

⁶⁰"Journal de ce qui s'est passé," AC, C11A, vol. 87, NAC, MG 1, microfilm, reel F-87, f. 211. La Galissonnière declared that "si les troubles continuent il n'y a point d'autre expédient que celuy desja proposé d'abandonner les postes ou il y a du danger, afin d'obliger les coupables a venir a michilimakinac et meme a Montreal pour y chercher leurs besoins, qu'il doit exiger que les meurtriers soient livrés, et si les circonstances le forcent d'accorder la paix aux meme conditions faites aux hurons du Détroit, qui estoit d'ammene[r] deux prisonniers anglois pour chaque françois qui avoit esté tué, il faut avant tout que les promesses soient effectuées afin que ces nations n[e] nous trahissent pas comme ont fait les hurons." The Governor-General requested that St. Pierre purchase a number of slaves, who were to be used to compensate Amerindians who handed over British prisoners to the French. ["Journal de ce qui

sufficiently tranquil that all of the traders and voyageurs were permitted to proceed to their posts.⁶¹

4.5 Amerindians in the central theatre, 1748

A major indication of the return of stability in the west was a steady stream of delegations from the nations of the Lakes to Canada in the spring and early summer of 1748 to make their peace with the French. On 14 June, 1748, twenty Mississaugas from the head of Lake Ontario arrived to see La Galissonnière. "Ils ont protesté fidélité et ont assuré n'avoir aucune part dans les mauvais colliers qui ont esté distribués."⁶² Ten days later, eighteen canoes of Amerindians from Michilimakinac arrived.⁶³ The Odawas of Saginaw turned over one person involved in an attack on the French at that village.⁶⁴ Odawa and Kickapoo representatives

s'est passé," AC, C11A, vol. 87, NAC, MG 1, microfilm, reel F-87, f. 210v.

⁶¹"Journal de ce qui s'est passé," AC, C11A, vol. 87, NAC, MG 1, microfilm, reel F-87, f. 222.

⁶²"Journal de ce qui s'est passé," AC, C11A, vol. 87, NAC, MG 1, microfilm, reel F-87, ff. 209v-210. Sixteen of the Mississaugas formed a war party to attack the British.

⁶³"Journal de ce qui s'est passé," AC, C11A, vol. 87, NAC, MG 1, microfilm, reel F-87, f. 211v.

⁶⁴"Journal de ce qui s'est passé," AC, C11A, vol. 87, NAC, MG 1, microfilm, reel F-87, ff. 211v-212. The French "a caressé ce chef qui s'est bien comporté en refusant neantmoins d'accepter ce calumet qu'il présentoit, jusques a ce que tous les meurtriers fussent remis, ... Celuy qui a esté livré a esté mis aux fers sans aucune promesse de luy faire graces. Cette sévérité a etonné ces sauvages auxquels il a esté expliqué combien il estoit important de ne plus accorder de pardon qui jusques a présent n'avoit servie

"ont protesté fidélité."⁶⁵ The Ojibwas of Michilimakinac gave the French two hostages to confirm their intention to surrender those involved in acts of violence against the French.⁶⁶ On the same day, one of the hostages was released.⁶⁷ La Galissonnière told the Ojibwas to replace the liberated hostages with the persons whose places they had taken.⁶⁸ All of the Amerindians lobbied strongly for the release of the prisoners,⁶⁹ but were informed by La Galissonnière that the reconciliation between the French and their allies did not extend to persons who had killed Frenchmen.⁷⁰

While these transactions with the northern bands were in progress, a flotilla of canoes arrived on 2 July, 1748 bearing Odawas

qu'a occasionner de nouvelle fautes."

⁶⁵"Journal de ce qui s'est passé," AC, C11A, vol. 87, NAC, MG 1, microfilm, reel F-87, ff. 211v-212.

⁶⁶One of these individuals, who had taken part in the attack at Ile La Cloche, displaying more bravado than common sense, had insinuated himself into this band while they were en route to Montreal. He was recognized and put in irons.

⁶⁷The hostage was released, "en faisant entendre a la nation qu'on ne vouloit pas faire souffrir les innocens pour les coupables." ["Journal de ce qui s'est passé," AC, C11A, vol. 87, NAC, MG 1, microfilm, reel F-87, f. 212].

⁶⁸La Galissonnière to Maurepas, 23 October, 1748, NYCD, vol. X, p. 183.

⁶⁹"Journal de ce qui s'est passé," AC, C11A, vol. 87, NAC, MG 1, microfilm, reel F-87, f. 212.

⁷⁰La Galissonnière to Maurepas, 23 October, 1748, NYCD, vol. X, p. 183.

Wyandots and Potawatomis from Detroit.⁷¹ The newcomers requested that the French forgive those Amerindians who had committed acts of violence and were in French hands, congratulated themselves for not taking part in these actions, and stressed their misery and loyalty to the French. La Galissonnière, however, refused to release "les meurtriers," and continued to insist all those implicated in the killing of Frenchmen be surrendered.⁷²

In response to La Galissonnière's declarations, the spokespeople of the Michilimakinac nations insisted for a second time on the release of the prisoners, La Galissonnière replied that they should consider "la sévérité de leur père contre les meurtriers comme une marque de sa tendresse pour ses véritables enfants." He added that out of consideration for the "bons sauvages" he would release the second hostage. The Amerindians "ont paru goûter cette réponse."⁷³

In spite of La Galissonnière's intransigence with regard to the prisoners, the very chiefs who pressed most strongly for their release also joined in requesting on 8 July that some of their young men be equipped to go to war, "tant pour donner de nouvelles marques de leur fidélité que pour réparer les fautes passées." As

⁷¹"Journal de ce qui s'est passé," AC, C11A, vol. 87, NAC, MG 1, microfilm, reel F-87, ff. 214-214v.

⁷²"Journal de ce qui s'est passé," AC, C11A, vol. 87, NAC, MG 1, microfilm, reel F-87, ff. 214-214v.

⁷³"Journal de ce qui s'est passé," AC, C11A, vol. 87, NAC, MG 1, microfilm, reel F-87, ff. 214-214v.

a result, 123 western Amerindians formed three war parties which raided along the New York frontier.⁷⁴ At the same time, the chiefs themselves sought to return home "pour travailler aux bonnes affaires." They were, however, asked by the French to remain in order to attend an upcoming council with the Six Nations.⁷⁵

On 14 July, a number of Menominees, Winnebagos, and other nations from La Baye arrived at Montreal. They handed over a warrior who had allegedly killed a Frenchman, who immediately joined the two prisoners from Detroit in irons.⁷⁶

On 25 July, 1748, the chiefs of the Detroit and Michilimakinac nations repeated their request to return home, as the Six Nations had not yet appeared. This time, their request was granted, and "Ils ont tous paru très satisfait et dans les meilleurs dispositions."⁷⁷

⁷⁴The first party, consisting of 90 western Amerindians, 50 Laurentian Amerindians, and 26 Canadians, one officer and several cadets likely took 11 prisoners and 25 scalps. Two more parties of 24 Odawas and Potawatomis of Detroit, and 9 Ojibwas, left on 16 July. ["Journal de ce qui s'est passé," AC, C11A, vol. 87, NAC, MG 1, microfilm, reel F-87, ff. 215v-216, 220]. See also La Galissonnière to Maurepas, 23 October, 1748, NYCD, vol. X, pp. 183-184.

⁷⁵"Journal de ce qui s'est passé," AC, C11A, vol. 87, NAC, MG 1, microfilm, reel F-87, ff. 215v-216, 220.

⁷⁶"Journal de ce qui s'est passé," AC, C11A, vol. 87, NAC, MG 1, microfilm, reel F-87, ff. 216-216v.

⁷⁷"Journal de ce qui s'est passé," AC, C11A, vol. 87, NAC, MG 1, microfilm, reel F-87, f. 217v.

La Galissonnière expected that when the western warriors returned from the frontier, they would renew their requests for the release of the three prisoners. So he ordered their transfer to Quebec.⁷⁸ So after the elders had left for the west, but before the warriors returned from the frontier the three prisoners were embarked in a canoe with an escort of eight soldiers, and sent off for Quebec.⁷⁹ However when the canoe reached Lake St. Peter, the unarmed and shackled prisoners killed the guards, cut their irons on the bows of the canoe with an axe, and escaped ashore and into the forest.⁸⁰

Through a series of errors, news of the attack was sent to Trois Rivières, where much time was lost drawing up a detailed report, instead of sending a courier immediately to Montreal. Even when word reached Montreal, the search for the fugitives was sluggish. It was believed that the three fugitives wandered a long time in the woods before striking the Ottawa River, where they fell in with the returning chiefs and elders, and returned home with them.⁸¹

⁷⁸La Galissonnière planned to release one prisoner to a chief of the Odawas of Saginaw, who, although related to this prisoner, had previously surrendered him to the French. [La Galissonnière to Maurepas, 23 October, 1748, NYCD, vol. X, p. 184].

⁷⁹La Galissonnière to Maurepas, 23 October, 1748, NYCD, vol. X, pp. 183-184.

⁸⁰La Galissonnière to Maurepas, 23 October, 1748, NYCD, vol. X, p. 184; "Journal de ce qui s'est passé," AC, C11A, vol. 87, NAC, MG 1, microfilm, reel F-87, ff. 220-220v. News of the attack reached Quebec on 10 August, 1748.

⁸¹La Galissonnière to Maurepas, 23 October, 1748, NYCD, vol. X, p. 184.

La Galissonnière considered this escape to be a serious setback— "On craint que les sauvages qui estoient en bon train ne se dérangerent par cet accident."⁸² But all that he could do was to write to the Governor of Montreal on 31 August, 1748 and instruct him to ask those western Amerindians who were still in that town to seek out the escapees and return them to the French.⁸³

In the meantime, on 30 April, preliminaries of peace between France and Great Britain were signed at Aix-la-Chapelle. The news reached Canada on 2 July, 1748, when a courier from St. Barnabé reported the arrival of the Zéphir frigate, bearing news of the suspension of hostilities.⁸⁴ A courier was immediately sent to Montreal to request that the Amerindian allies cease hostilities against the British. For the French, the war with the British might be over, and the Amerindian alliance renewed, but the broader geostrategic problems of New France in the west remained. The lodgments of the Pennsylvanians south of Lake Erie were as great a menace to the French in 1748 as they had been in 1744. On 3 October, 1748, La Galissonnière wrote to Longueuil to remind him that "quoy que nous

⁸²"Journal de ce qui s'est passé," AC, C11A, vol. 87, NAC, MG 1, microfilm, reel F-87, ff. 220-220v; La Galissonnière to Maurepas, 23 October, 1748, NYCD, vol. X, p. 184.

⁸³"Journal de ce qui s'est passé," AC, C11A, vol. 87, NAC, MG 1, microfilm, reel F-87, f. 223v. In fact, the escape of the prisoners had removed a major source of friction between the French and their allies.

⁸⁴"Journal de ce qui s'est passé," AC, C11A, vol. 87, NAC, MG 1, microfilm, reel F-87, f. 219.

soyons en paix il faut toujours s'opposer par la force aux etablissemens que les anglois entreprendroient de faire" in the west.⁸⁵

4.6 Conclusion

Beginning in the late summer of 1747, the pro-French elements of the Three Fires gradually asserted control over events in the west, and brought Franco-Amerindian violence to an end. Throughout the negotiations leading to peace these Amerindians held the initiative. Their intervention terminated the fighting on terms acceptable to them, rather than the French, as the alliance with the French was renewed, and prisoners held by the French restored to liberty.

Amerindian actions in 1744-1748 are a matter of record, their motives remain shrouded. French documents record their belief that other Amerindian groups were intimidated by the Three Fires, but not why this confederacy felt their best interests would be served by continued alliance with the French.

It is clear that they acted most in accordance with their perception of their own best interests, rather than being influenced by the French, the New Yorkers, the Pennsylvanians, or

⁸⁵"Journal de ce qui s'est passé," AC, C11A, vol. 87, NAC, MG 1, microfilm, reel F-87, f. 225.

the ending of the intra-European war. They did not act until it was clear that the anti-French coalition had failed. When they did intervene, they put an end to a process that was clearly not working. They did so in the absence of influence from the French, the British, or news of the end of the war in Europe,⁸⁶ which arrived long after Three Fires intervention had led to the restoration of the alliance.

The ability of the Three Fires to influence the course of events contrasts sharply with that of the French. Unlike the Amerindians, the French in 1747-1748 reacted to, rather than initiated, events. For all the hardline orders emanating from Quebec, the French did very little that affected the situation, beyond receiving Amerindian delegations. Only once, at Detroit, did they initiate military action against anti-French Amerindians, and here they succeeded only with the assistance of their erstwhile opponents among the Wyandots of Sandusky.

The war between the anti-French coalition and the French was curiously one-sided. In the Great Lakes region in the 1740s, when Amerindians chose to make war there was war, when they sought peace, there was peace. The French were left with little choice but to respond to the actions, military and diplomatic, of their Amerindian allies and adversaries.

⁸⁶And the consequent prospect in a drop in the price of European goods.

CONCLUSIONS

c.1 Franco-Amerindian conflict, 1744-1748

The French of Canada, wrote Josué Dubois Berthelot de Beaucours,¹ the governor of Montreal in 1747, "sont au milieu d'une immense forêt," within which in the summer of 1747, they were at every moment threatened with assassination by Amerindians. One can never, he continued, truly know or trust Amerindians— "ce qui est la vérité. Ils sont tous fort traitres sans pouvoir presque de mêler les mauvaises des bons."²

Prior to the summer of 1747, the Amerindians of the Great Lakes region had been allied to the French for over a century. They had accepted a fortified French presence in their homelands, permitted armed French convoys to pass freely through their lands, traded with the French for their mutual profit, allowed French officers to mediate intertribal disputes, and joined with the French in wars against the Anglo-Americans and Chickasaws in which they had no particular political or economic interest. The French possessed neither the will nor the means to conquer and rule the Pays d'en

¹C.J. Russ, "Josué Dubois Berthelot de Beaucours," in Frances G. Halpenny, ed., DCB, vol. III, pp. 189-192.

²Beaucours, "Mémoire de Canada de 1747 [entreprises de Guerre contre les sauvages]," November, 1747, AC, C11A, vol. 87, NAC, MG 1, microfilm, reel F-87, ff. 17, 21.

haut. Without the active and voluntary cooperation of their Amerindian allies, the French presence in the west would have been meaningless. Gaining this acquiescence involved maintaining alliances that were intricate networks of reciprocal rights and obligations.

During the War of the Austrian Succession, it became very difficult for the French to maintain their obligations to their Amerindian allies. In the course of that conflict, many of the goods that under normal conditions would have been destined for trade with and transfer to Amerindians of the Great Lakes never left France, were taken at sea by privateers, or were confiscated by the colonial government and used for the defence of Canada against apprehended invasion.

In the interior, an already difficult situation was exacerbated by five specific actions of the French themselves. First, the increase in prices charged by the French for trade goods provoked general resentment. Second, the killing by the Odawa of Pennsylvanian traders who had been taken prisoner at the instigation of the French offended the Wyandot. Third, attempts to cajole the Three Fires Confederacy to attack Pennsylvanian traders in the White River induced strain. Fourth, heavy handed French trading practices at Niagara had made the "the path [to that fort] foul and dirty"³ and angered all who passed through. Fifth, the Mississauga were

³Johnson to Clinton, 28 August, 1747, NYCD, vol. VI, p. 391.

alienated by attempts to keep them from trading at Oswego.

Moreover, factions among the Amerindians of the Great Lakes advocated the furthering of their tribal interests through closer ties with New York or Pennsylvania. These groups had long been in contact with both the New Yorkers at Oswego and Pennsylvanian traders south of Lake Erie. Although the Anglo-Americans had never fully exploited this opportunity, channels of communication already existed. The Anglo-French war made the British more receptive to Amerindian overtures, and led them to invite western Amerindians to join them as allies in an invasion of Canada.

Simultaneously, George Croghan, and possibly other Pennsylvania traders active in the White River area, were attempting to induce their Amerindian trading partners to attack the French.

Now, the Amerindians of the west had to decide how to respond to this combination of circumstances. None of the nations of the Lakes acted as a body, but significant factions among each of the Odawa, Ojibwa, Mississauga, Miami and Wyandot sought to turn to New York and Pennsylvania for matériel, and attacked the French. The result was a Franco-Amerindian conflict that broke out during the War of the Austrian Succession, which opened a new phase in European-Amerindian warfare.

During the seventeenth century, the Amerindians of the eastern

seaboard had initiated a number of major attacks against Anglo-American settlement colonies, with the objective of destroying these encroachments upon their ancestral territories. The Amerindians belonged to the large and sophisticated political units of the coast, which were in the process of being broken up and displaced.⁴ Since then, major wars between Europeans and Amerindians had been confined to commercial conflicts directed against first the Iroquois, then the Fox, by the French and the western allies.

These attacks on the French in 1747-1748 marked the first attempt by Amerindians to assemble a coalition to expel a group of Europeans from the Great Lakes region, and as such marks an one step towards resistance to European penetration. It is important to note, however, that in this case these attacks were directed specifically against the French, not Europeans as a whole, and that one of the goals of the anti-French coalition was the replacement of French by British traders.

The attacks in 1747-1748 were conducted by members of nations whose previous military action against Europeans had been largely limited to acting as auxiliaries to the French, who induced them to raid New England and New York. They belonged to a variety of political

⁴James Axtell, "The Rise and Fall of the Powhatan Empire," in After Columbus: Essays in the Ethnohistory of Colonial North America (New York, 1988), pp. 182-221; Francis Jennings, The Invasion of America: Indians, Colonialism, and the Cant of Conquest (Chapel Hill, 1975), pp. 202-227.

and ethnic groupings, who formed a coalition for the purpose of waging war against Europeans. Their targets were the isolated outposts, occupied by their erstwhile trading partners and allies located well beyond the limits of French or Anglo-American settlement. Unlike earlier conflicts along the Atlantic littoral and later conflicts in the interior, the war was not directed at expelling Europeans in general from tribal territory. Instead the coalition hoped to produce a more satisfactory relationship with Europeans.

The anti-French elements in the west in 1744-1748 appear to have been inspired by specific grievances rather than a political programme. They sought European trading partners and allies with whom they could establish a satisfactory relationship. Their aim was to replace French with New York or Pennsylvania traders, not expel Europeans from the Great Lakes area. At least some elements of the coalition hoped to produce a more satisfactory relationship with Europeans, and used acts of violence as a medium. Their instrument to effect this transformation was the "mourning war."⁵

A major flaw in the Franco-Amerindian relationship, was a lack of effective ways for Amerindians to apply pressure on the French without resorting to violence. Complaints to French officials in 1744-1746 produced soothing lectures on economic realities rather than adequate supplies of goods at customary prices. Changing the terms

⁵see chapter 2.

of trade constituted a violation of the terms of alliance in the eyes of Amerindians. Yet it was quite impossible for a band to sue the Compagnie des Indes. Nor could they take their case to the metropolitan authorities in Versailles. Doing business with traders from New York or Pennsylvania merchants was a longstanding practice. But although Amerindians could threaten to trade exclusively with New York or Pennsylvania, Anglo-American traders were not necessarily in a position to supply their immediate needs, and dealings with the Anglo-Americans generated French attempts to block their allies, rather than to redress their grievances.

They could, however, treat the French as persons who had broken an agreement, and no longer held the same status as allies. Low intensity warfare was endemic in Amerindian societies, and limited acts of violence were a recognized way of dealing with outsiders. The allied tribes resorted to violence to express their extreme displeasure with the French, after a series of complaints had failed. According to statements made by Ohio Amerindians to Pennsylvanians, when the coalition struck against the French, they spared some traders that "they permitted to go to Canada naked & acquaint their Father Onontio that his children the Indians were angry with him."⁶ Violence thus became both a compelling form of communication when the use of other methods had failed to gain the desired results.

⁶Meeting of 28 November, 1747, Minutes of the Provincial Council of Pennsylvania, vol. V, p. 162.

Large scale violence against the French by the western allies was unprecedented in 1747, and would not have occurred then had it not been for the Anglo-French war. Prior to 1744, the existence of a network of alliances made war against the French an uncertain proposition. Any individual or group which advocated war with the French would be restrained by the dominant pro-French faction. Moreover, war with the French would also mean war with their Amerindian allies. But once the French had apparently reneged on the terms of alliance, barriers to attacks upon them were lowered, and violence became more permissible and possible. The nations of the Great Lakes already contained significant anti-French factions, who were now presented with an opportunity to open closer ties with New York or Pennsylvania.

Nonetheless, grievances against the French were such that violence became possible, but never to the extent that a majority of the fighters of the Great Lakes nations would unite and mount a unified and successful challenge against the French. The events of 1747 shook the French presence in the west, but never seriously threatened it. Like each of subsequent wars of the Amerindians of the Great Lakes area against Europeans, the conflict of 1747 ended quietly, with the renewal of normal relations with the French. For the anti-French factions of the Miami and Wyandot, failure to defeat the French meant relocation to new homes in the Ohio country, and the establishment of formal relations with the British of Pennsylvania.

c.2 Amerindian warfare in the mid-eighteenth century

Yet if the coalition ultimately conceded defeat, they did so only after causing the French considerable concern. Longueuil's first report of 23 June suggested that the French were the victims of a general alliance among the tribes of the Great Lakes. He informed Quebec "que tous les sauvages des environs excepté ceux des ilinois avoient formé le dessein de détruire tous les françois de Détroit une des festes de la Pentecoste, [early in June] et d'aller ensuite au fort y mettre tout a feu et a sang."⁷ The attack at Kichaga was explained as the work of "quelques hurons ayant frapé trop tôt."⁸ Beaucours went further, and in a memoire that occasionally verges upon the apocalyptic, suggested that the Mohawk attacks on Canada, the unwillingness of the Kahnawake and Kanesatake to fight the Six Nations, and the activities of the western coalition were all elements of "une conspiration generale de la peau noire contre la blanche."⁹

The extent to which the campaign against the French was planned in advance is difficult to determine. Whatever preparations were made, the coalition failed to mobilize a majority of the warriors of the

⁷"Extrait en forme de journal," 1747, AC, C11A, vol. 87, NAC, MG 1, microfilm, reel F-87, f. 74v. See also Madame Joiberte de Longueuil to Maurepas, 2 November, 1747, AC, C11A, vol. 89, NAC, MG 1, microfilm, reel F-89, f. 252v.

⁸"Extrait en forme de journal," 1747, AC, C11A, vol. 87, NAC, MG 1, microfilm, reel F-87, f. 74v.

⁹Beaucours, "Mémoire de Canada de 1747 [entreprises de Guerre contre les sauvages]," November, 1747, AC, C11A, vol. 87, NAC, MG 1, microfilm, reel F-87, f. 16.

tribes allied to the French. This meant that the coalition was never able to assemble sufficient military strength to impose its will upon the French. Lurking outside Detroit, killing cattle, and attacking isolated parties of traders on Lake Huron would not of themselves defeat the French.

The coalition of 1747 lacked the religious and ideological underpinnings that bound together subsequent attempts to hold the Great Lakes basin for Amerindians. If its members articulated a political agenda or possessed spiritual leaders that helped to bring members of different nations together, they do not appear in the documentary record.¹⁰

Amerindians in the west were not yet prepared to make a united stand against Europeans. Regardless of the grievances of many western Amerindians, by 1747, the French and Amerindians had enjoyed close and generally satisfactory military and commercial relations for close to a century. This created a large body of Amerindians, who, if reluctant to declare openly for the French, were also unwilling to participate in attacks upon them. Pontiac,

¹⁰Pontiac, in contrast, declared himself to be pro-French, anti-British, in favour of the French relationship with the Amerindians, and opposed to a British takeover in the west. Tecumseh led a pan-Amerindian movement. Their coalitions were supported by the religious unity provided by Delaware and Seneca prophets and Tenskwatawa for Pontiac and Tecumseh. See Jennings, Empire of Fortune, p. 442; M.M. Navarre, "Journal of Pontiac's Conspiracy," pp. 7-17; Charles E. Hunter, "The Delaware Nativist Revival of the Mid-Eighteenth Century," Ethnohistory, vol. XVIII, no. 1 (winter, 1971), pp. 39-49.

at least, stated that he had vigorously opposed the anti-French faction among the Odawa, and he was presumably not alone. The Great Lakes area in 1747 was not yet directly threatened by the advance of European settlement, and the Europeans in the west were too few to be perceived as a threat.

Even when united, Amerindians laboured under significant handicaps when making war upon Europeans. Amerindian war, as practised in the 1740s, was well suited to conflict with opponents possessing similar social and economic systems, and playing by the same rules. Adherence to the traditional pattern of "mourning war" had brought the nations involved in the anti-French coalition significant success against the Catawba, Dakota, and other Amerindian enemies, but was less suited to a campaign against the French.

Amerindian males might derive their identity and social status from their role as combatants, but they were not professionals. Full time soldiers and continuous warfare were a luxury that Amerindian societies could not afford. Amerindian males were needed to hunt for food and for pelts to exchange for European goods. Europeans could afford to withdraw men from production for decades at a time. Amerindians could not. Time spent away at war was paid for in lost production. As a result, war was a luxury that Amerindian communities could afford only in limited quantities for a limited time, and they could only sustain brief strikes against an enemy.

When fighting for the French, the economic costs of war were transferred to the French Crown, making it possible for the allies to participate in quite ambitious military ventures. Amerindians fighting in their own way were one component of a system, as relays of warriors travelled from their homes to the war zone and then returned after engaging the enemy. In return, the French paid the expenses of the warriors, and provided them with weapons, munitions, and provisions. In 1747, adequate support from New York or Pennsylvania could have filled this gap, but it never came. Left to their own sources of supply, the resources that could be allocated to military activities were much more limited. Without an ally to supply provisions and technical support, Amerindian military capabilities were limited.

c.3 The Coalition's war against the French

By the mid-eighteenth century, Amerindian warfare had adapted to the use of European weapons. The use of European weapons made each warrior much more powerful, and increased the power of the band against other tribes. But it also gave their European partners a potential veto over Amerindian military action. For Amerindians did not possess the technological infrastructure to support war in the gunpowder era. They lacked their own supplies of muskets, spare parts, munitions and technicians to maintain weapons, and depended on European technicians to repair their weapons. Once munitions stocks were exhausted and weapons began to need parts and repair,

Amerindian military capability quickly degraded. This meant that it was no longer possible for Amerindians to go to war for extended periods without support from a European partner.

In 1747, the French would not, and the Anglo-Americans could not, provide the coalition with logistical support. This imposed crippling limitations on its military capacity, that the coalition had to succeed using whatever munitions were at hand, or fail. Under these conditions, the failure of the coalition to secure New York or Pennsylvanian material support for a campaign in the Great Lakes region prior to engaging in war was a major error. This failure is the more notable, given that these nations had previously agreed to join with New York in an invasion of Canada. They had thus committed themselves to support British goals without securing solid commitments to help in achieving their own goals.

Amerindian military habits made them very effective when waging war against other Amerindians, but less effective against a European power like the French. Amerindians tended to strike against the first target that presented itself, regardless of its value. Individual warriors tended to withdraw from combat after they had fulfilled their personal objectives by striking a blow against an enemy.¹¹ Strong leadership or a significant threat could overcome

¹¹"Fussent-ils mille à un détachement de guerre, pour 4 chevelures fait, ils retournent tous à la cabane." [L.-A. de Bougainville, "Journal de l'expédition d'Amérique commencée en l'année 1756, le 15 mars," Rapport de l'archiviste de la Province de Québec, 1923-1924, p. 346]. See also Richter, "War and Culture,"

these tendencies, but unlike the coalition that formed against the British in 1763, the coalition proved to be incapable of maintaining a sustained effort against the French.

Amerindians at war with the French laboured under a serious security problem. The French, in the course of a century of contact with the western allies, had built up networks of personal contacts among the tribes, and could usually expect to receive a warning when violence against them was contemplated.¹² At both Michilimakinac and Detroit, close ties between French and Amerindians had produced individuals who were prepared to carry warnings of attacks to the commandants, who were thereby able to take measures to thwart these actions. The security of the coalition was dismal. This meant that at both Detroit and Michilimakinac, two of the three major objectives of the coalition,¹³ the French were warned of impending attacks in time to take precautions. Since the coalition planned to capture both forts depended upon surprise, this eliminated any reasonable probability of success.¹⁴ With their strength thus limited, Amerindians at war

William and Mary Quarterly, 3rd series, vol. XL, no. 4 (October, 1983), pp. 525-559.

¹²For one important aspect of the close ties which developed between Canadians and Amerindians, see J. Peterson, "Prelude to Red River: A Social Portrait of the Great Lakes Métis," Ethnohistory, vol. XXV, no. 12 (Winter, 1978), pp. 43-68.

¹³The third was Fort Niagara.

¹⁴This contrasts sharply with the elaborate precautions taken by the Ojibwa at Michilimakinac in 1763, which may have been the result of lessons learned in 1747. See Warren, History of the

with Europeans needed to make the best possible use of what resources in warriors, weapons and munitions were at hand. The anti-French coalition in 1747-1748, however, did not make war effectively.

The restriction of hostilities to the Great Lakes area meant that the coalition was unable to apply pressure directly on the French. Although warriors from the Great Lakes were willing to travel great distances to fight against the Dakota and Catawba, they did not achieve the same mobility against the French. The coalition was apparently unable to plan beyond expelling the French from tribal territory. By striking at isolated outposts, they merely nibbled at the fringes of French power in North America. New France could lose every post west of Montreal, and still remain intact. Had the coalition joined with the Mohawks in raiding into Canada, they would have found a more effective means to exert pressure upon the French.

Moreover, having launched their attacks, the leaders of the coalition confined their efforts to dealing with the local situation, rather than developing a continental strategy. They made little effort to retain the initiative by anticipating and blocking French reactions.¹⁵ The threat posed by the Ojibwa and Odawa at

Ojibways, pp. 200-201.

¹⁵During Pontiac's War, Amerindians attacked convoys going to Detroit, but the British then had armed vessels on the Lakes, and were able to shoot their way through.

Saginaw after the attack on a Frenchmen there was enough to cut off communications between Detroit and Michilimakinac for the French,¹⁶ but otherwise French lines of communication in the west remained intact. Isolating the French in the west from reinforcements and supplies would have been a greater blow than the fall of a major fort, since without supplies from Canada, continued French presence in the west would have been impossible.¹⁷

The coalition failed to attack the French when they were most vulnerable, during the period after the fall of Louisbourg in 1745 and the apprehended invasion of Canada in 1746. Their blows fell upon the French only after the moment of maximum French vulnerability had passed. This meant that men and matériel were available for use in the west, which would not have been the case had Canada been under attack.

In the south, a planned attack on Detroit was preceded, and the existence of an anti-French coalition betrayed, by a strike on a minor target, when the Wyandots of Sandusky and Iroquois of the White River attacked the French traders from the White River near

¹⁶"Journal de ce qui s'est passé," AC, C11A, vol. 87, NAC, MG 1, microfilm, reel F-87, f. 213.

¹⁷During the Seven Years' War, a French officer noted that the severing of French lines of communication to the west would have "fait tombée le fort duquesne de lui-même," along with Detroit, Michilimakinac, and the remainder of the posts of the Pays d'en haut. [Doreil to d'Argenson, 1 September, 1756, France, Ministère de la Guerre, A1, vol. 3457, NAC, MG 1, microfilm, reel F-666, no. 121, p. 6].

Sandusky. The French believed that the Ojibwa, Odawa, and Wyandot had planned to attack Detroit, "and the conspiracy was pretty well managed and on the point of exploding, when the Sandusky assassination led to its discovery."¹⁸

Just why the Wyandot would elect to pass up an opportunity to surprise Detroit in order to attack a small group of traders must remain a matter for speculation, especially since, according to French sources, Orontony himself was present. From a European point of view, this behavior is inexplicable. For Amerindians, however, accustomed to striking at the first target that presented itself, regardless of its size or importance, this fell within the patterns of their customary military practices.¹⁹

The victories of the coalition in the summer of 1747 were a series of isolated attacks, identical to the operations that would have been mounted against a tribal enemy.²⁰ These attacks would have

¹⁸La Galissonière to Maurepas, 23 October, 1748, NYCD, vol. X, p. 182.

¹⁹The importance of this attack should not, however, be exaggerated, given that the French at Detroit did not immediately assume a posture of defence, and did not take serious precautions until they were warned by a Wyandot of an impending attack.

²⁰The most common pattern in Amerindian warfare was to strike a blow against an enemy, then return home. The series of major attacks that led to the dispersal of the Hurons by the Iroquois and the siege of Detroit during Pontiac's War were exceptions. These exceptions, however, indicate that Amerindians recognized that small scale operations against minor objectives were not always appropriate means to achieve their ends, and that they were quite capable of planning and engaging in complex, sustained military operations.

represented major success against the Catawbas or Chickasaws, but inflicted only minor material damage upon the French. Yet even had the coalition attacks inflicted serious damage upon the French, the overall success of the coalition would have remained in doubt. For the French depended not only upon forts or traders to secure their position in the west, but upon the continued acquiescence to their presence of influential factions within the nations of the Great Lakes. As long as there were Amerindians who were willing to fulfil their goals through association with the French, the loss of the physical infrastructure meant less than the continued willingness of the Three Fires to deal with the French.

If the coalition hoped to remove the French from the west, and replace them with more reliable suppliers from New York or Pennsylvania, their real target should have been not the physical manifestations of the French presence in the west, but the willingness of the pro-French Amerindians of the Great Lakes to stand by the French or remain neutral. The success or failure of attacks on the French was therefore less important than the influence of these actions upon the Three Fires. Regardless of the position of the French, it was the attitude of the dominant faction among the Three Fires that was the centre of gravity in the Great Lakes region in 1744-1748. Failure to attract the support of the Three Fires, meant that despite many tactical and diplomatic successes, the attempt to expel the French from the Great Lakes region was condemned to ultimate failure. These military factors

were important less for their material impact upon the French than for their moral impact upon the one group in the Great Lakes Region with the power to control events, the Three Fires Confederacy.

c.4 Attempts by the French to exercise power in the Great Lakes Region

The French did not, between 1744 and 1748, prove capable of eliciting the responses that they desired from the Amerindians of the Great Lakes. Members of those nations did exactly as they pleased, regardless of French solicitations. They did not, apparently, perceive the French to be in a position to compel obedience. Various groups of Amerindians themselves chose to follow courses of action ranging from joining in French war parties in Canada to attacking the French outposts in the Great Lakes region, to ignoring Europeans altogether and pursuing their own interests in wars with the Dakota. The French in the west in 1744-1748 were not strong enough to control the situation. They were strong enough to ride out the storm and endure until the violence was ended by Amerindian actions.

The actual numerical French presence in the Great Lakes region was minimal. Prior to 1753, an average of about one thousand Canadians could be found west of Montreal, together with a few hundred

settlers at Detroit and in the Illinois country.²¹ Although few in number they occupied a network of strongpoints at key locations throughout the west. While the defences of the most of these posts were rudimentary, they could defend themselves against limited attack.²² The smaller outlying posts were supported by larger forts at Niagara, Detroit, Michilimakinac and Chartres, from which reinforcements could be summoned and to which traders could withdraw in time of crisis to ride out the storm and wait for relief.

Behind the scattered little fortlets and larger strongholds of the Pays d'en Haut stood the potential power of the Canadian manpower reserve and French supplies and armaments. The bureaucratic governments and pre-industrial economies of the European colonies were capable of mobilizing much larger quantities of manpower and matériel than the tribal societies of the interior. Although they were themselves divided into factions, compared to the Amerindians the French were much more, and capable of obedience to the commands of a distant Governor-General and the commis who advised an even

²¹K.M. Brown, "La colonisation française de l'Illinois" une réévaluation," Revue d'histoire de l'Amérique française, vol. XXXIX, no. 4 (Spring, 1986), p. 586; W.J. Eccles, "The Fur Trade and Eighteenth Century French Imperialism," The William and Mary Quarterly, 3rd series, vol. XL(July, 1983), p. 355.

²²See, for example, J. Long, Voyages and Travels of an Indian Interpreter and Trader (London, 1791), pp. 62-72. While Long is chiefly concerned with displaying his own heroism, his account of a minor frontier incident provides convincing evidence of the efficacy of even the most ramshackle fort, manned by only two defenders, against a threatened Amerindian attack.

more distant minister. Unlike the Amerindian bands, the French state possessed the will and the power to compel obedience from members of French society. Without the coercive powers of the state, the French fur brigades would not have left Montreal for Detroit and Michilimakinac in 1747. When first ordered to assemble to man the canoes of the Michilimakinac convoy, Canadian voyageurs had refused to risk a dangerous voyage. But they were compelled to take their places and the brigades left for the west.

Possession of artillery and disciplined heavy infantry meant that the French were capable of fighting at a higher level of intensity than Amerindians. With these capabilities, there was no point in the west that they could not hold, if they were willing to invest the necessary resources. That this occupation would be entirely futile without the support of the local inhabitants, would somewhat negate this advantage. On the other hand, much of the military capacity of the French was directed at the British rather than Amerindians, and not therefore relevant to a consideration of their ability to influence events in the interior. Heavy artillery at Quebec could not threaten Amerindians. The French infrastructure in the west was organized to mobilize the resources of the west, not to control territory or populations. The physical manifestation of French military power, forts and large expeditionary forces, were more suitable for deployment against the British than

Amerindians.²³ Holding a point was of value only in terms of what that point was expected to accomplish. The construction of Fort Niagara, in spite of the opposition of the Iroquois, on territory claimed by the Seneca, is an example of how these resources could be deployed to gain possession of a strategic site. But advantages so gained were most useful against the British. They gave the French the ability to interfere with British activities, not to control Amerindians.

Yet the French, in 1744-1748, behaved as if they were entitled to expect obedience from their Amerindian allies. French attempts to exercise power in the Great Lakes region in 1744-1748 were based upon their perceptions of Amerindians and the relationship that existed between these nations and themselves. This was to cause the French considerable frustration and difficulty, since the premises which they acted upon were largely false. Their perceptions did not reflect reality with any degree of accuracy, and led them to make a series of bad decisions.

Between 1744 and 1748, the French were in a position to express a variety of opinions and attitudes, and to propose and carry out actions, involving their Amerindian allies. Their characterizations of Amerindians during a time of stress are much more interesting

²³The fort at Niagara, for example, was an effective barrier against the British, if reinforced and armed, but could only provide a passive base for operations against Amerindians, and act as a place of refuge.

than those expressed in periods when things were going smoothly, and relationships taken for granted.²⁴ Through these characterizations, the French gave every indication that in their own minds, the Amerindians of the Great Lakes occupied territory that had been incorporated into the French empire, and that the inhabitants were expected to act in ways that advanced the goals of that empire, just like the inhabitants of Canada. This is evident both in the plans that they made and the words that they used to describe Amerindians. When one applies a label to a group or action, one is also making a judgement. The French, by their choice of words, expressed a strong opinion regarding the actions of the coalition, their views of the relationship with the Amerindians of the Great Lakes, French authority over the Great Lakes region, and the place of the Great Lakes region in the French empire. They suggest, firstly, that the Amerindians of the Great Lakes were subject to French authority, and secondly, that attacks upon the French by Amerindians were not legitimate acts of war like

²⁴Amerindian attitudes towards the French were less articulated, but were reflected in their actions. It is notable that those who committed acts of violence against the French did not meet with general disapproval, or attempts to limit their freedom of action. Even those who later stated that they disapproved of the attacks accepted their share of the plunder. The release of fighters involved in the killing of Frenchmen was consistently sought by their fellow tribesmen, even when it proved necessary to kill Frenchmen to do so. With regard to shortages of trade goods, Amerindians, in spite of their longstanding partnership with the French, proved indifferent to French concerns. They refused to accept excuses regarding legitimate problems with the fur trade caused by factors beyond their control. Even temporary interruptions in supply were unacceptable, and there was no sympathy expressed for the French who were trying in good faith to balance the needs of the fur trade against those of a small, isolated colony facing invasion.

casualties inflicted by the British, but instead were equivalent to civil crimes.²⁵

In their reports on coalition activities during the War of the Austrian Succession, French officers and officials spoke of them as though they were as much subjects of the crown as the Canadians. unruly, disobedient subjects, but subjects none the less. None of the terms used conceded the least legitimate independence to Amerindians, except for the ability to commit crimes. The Wyandot of Sandusky were described by the French as "des hurons rebelles,"²⁶ led by Orontony, "ce traître."²⁷ The attacks upon the French by Amerindian "mutins,"²⁸ "traîtres"²⁹ and "rebelles"³⁰ belonging to the "parti revolté,"³¹ who forsook "leur devoirs"³²

²⁵Crimes which, if committed by Frenchmen, would have led to arrest and prosecution.

²⁶"Parolles des anglois [à] ... chouaguen au nommé Tabaké huron en luy donnant un collier pour les hurons du Detroit et pour Nicolas Orontony chef des hurons rebelle," enclosed in la Jonquière to Maurepas, 12 November, 1749, AC, C11A, vol. 93, NAC, MG 1, microfilm, reel F-93, f. 60v.

²⁷"Journal de ce qui s'est passé," AC, C11A, vol. 87, NAC, MG 1, microfilm, reel F-87, ff. 179v-180, 180v.

²⁸La Galissonnière to la Naudière [aux Miamis], 9 November, 1748, MG 24, L3, Baby Collection, vol. 1, Correspondence, 1745-1745, p. 1155.

²⁹"Journal de ce qui s'est passé," AC, C11A, vol. 87, NAC, MG 1, microfilm, reel F-87, f. 198.

³⁰"Journal de ce qui s'est passé," AC, C11A, vol. 87, NAC, MG 1, microfilm, reel F-87, f. 203v.

³¹"Canada: Sauvages," 15 April, 1749, AC, C11A, vol. 94, NAC, MG 1, microfilm, reel F-94, ff. 73-74.

and "fair toujours l'insolent."³³ Their actions were characterized as "indigne conduite,"³⁴ "une révolte au detroit"³⁵ and "la revolte et l'infidélité"³⁶ "cette trahison"³⁷ of Amerindians that "nous trahissent ... comme ont fait les hurons."³⁸ Terms like "rebelle," "traître," and "revolte," appearing in both public and private correspondence, imply the perception of existence of a higher legitimate authority against which treason or rebellion has been committed.³⁹ A "traitor" has different motives from an individual pursuing conflicting, but rational self interest. The

³²"Journal de ce qui s'est passé," AC, C11A, vol. 87, NAC, MG 1, microfilm, reel F-87, f. 185.

³³Nicole Deschamps, ed., Lettres au cher fils: Correspondence d'Elisabeth Bégon avec son gendre (1748-1753), (Montreal, 1972), p.32.

³⁴"Journal de ce qui s'est passé," AC, C11A, vol. 87, NAC, MG 1, microfilm, reel F-87, f. 212.

³⁵Havy & Lefebvre to Monsieur Guy, 22 July, 1747, MG 24, L3, Baby Collection, vol. 1, Correspondence, 1745-1749, pp. 1049.

³⁶Raymond to Maurepas, 2 November, 1747, AC, C11A, vol. 89, NAC, MG 1, microfilm, reel F-89, ff. 225-226.

³⁷"Journal de ce qui s'est passé," AC, C11A, vol. 87, NAC, MG 1, microfilm, reel F-87, f. 190v.

³⁸"Journal de ce qui s'est passé," AC, C11A, vol. 87, NAC, MG 1, microfilm, reel F-87, f. 210v.

³⁹Roger Mettam's collection of Documents, Government and Society in Louis XIV's France (London, 1977), pp. 239-262, contains a section on revolt, in which many of the terms used by the French to refer to the coalition in the 1740s appear in the metropolitan context to characterize metropolitan rebels in the seventeenth century. Catherine Desbarats has noted that officials of absolutists states were reluctant to speak frankly about the states lack of absolute power. See "Amerindians and Colonial Government Finances in New France, 1700-1750," Paper presented at the annual meeting of the Canadian Historical Association, Kingston, 1991, pp. 15, 17, 19.

use of these terms implies that the French had in their own minds an authority against which one could commit treason, a much closer relationship than a European alliance.

The expressions used by the French to describe those Amerindians whose actions met with their approval are equally suggestive. They were "bien fidel,"⁴⁰ "affidée,"⁴¹ "bons sauvages"⁴² and "bons françois"⁴³ who gave the French "fidélité et obéissance."⁴⁴ They were expected to "estre sage,"⁴⁵ be "affectionné aux françois"⁴⁶ display "sincere fidélité"⁴⁷ "la fidelité de ces sauvages"⁴⁸ and

⁴⁰"Extrait en forme de journal," 1747, AC, C11A, vol. 87, NAC, MG 1, microfilm, reel F-87, f. 87.

⁴¹"Journal de ce qui s'est passé," AC, C11A, vol. 87, NAC, MG 1, microfilm, reel F-87, ff. 204-204v.

⁴²"Journal de ce qui s'est passé," AC, C11A, vol. 87, NAC, MG 1, microfilm, reel F-87, f. 214-214v.

⁴³"Extrait en forme de journal," 1747, AC, C11A, vol. 87, NAC, MG 1, microfilm, reel F-87, f. 87.

⁴⁴"Journal de ce qui s'est passé," AC, C11A, vol. 87, NAC, MG 1, microfilm, reel F-87, f. 204.

⁴⁵"Journal de ce qui s'est passé," AC, C11A, vol. 87, NAC, MG 1, microfilm, reel F-87, ff. 179v-180, 180v. French children who misbehave are admonished to "sois sage" [be good].

⁴⁶"Extrait en forme de journal," 1747, AC, C11A, vol. 87, NAC, MG 1, microfilm, reel F-87, ff. 96v-97.

⁴⁷"Journal de ce qui s'est passé," AC, C11A, vol. 87, NAC, MG 1, microfilm, reel F-87, ff. 179v-180, 180v.

⁴⁸"Extrait en forme de journal," 1747, AC, C11A, vol. 87, NAC, MG 1, microfilm, reel F-87, f. 86.

"nous servoient fideles."⁴⁹

When they described acts of violence against the French committed by Amerindians, the French resorted to the vocabulary of civil crime, rather than war. Victims of "l'indigne action qu'ils [Amerindians] ont commise"⁵⁰ Frenchmen in the west were "assassinées"⁵¹ by "meurtriers"⁵² and "les coupables"⁵³ rather than the casualties of legitimate acts of war. That these killings were similar in every respect to those inflicted upon Anglo-American settlers on the New England and New York frontier, and those contemplated by French plans to sponsor attacks against the British of the White River, Ohio valley, and Hudson Bay, by Amerindian war parties was apparently lost on the French.

⁴⁹"Journal de ce qui s'est passé," AC, C11A, vol. 87, NAC, MG 1, microfilm, reel F-87, ff. 179v-180, 180v. All of these statements are compatible with French assertions that they enjoyed sovereignty over Amerindian nations, which enjoyed limited independence under a French protectorate. Yet they are indicative only of French attitudes towards Amerindians, not the geopolitical realities of the Great Lakes region in the mid-eighteenth century. For a concise exposition of French attitudes with regard to Amerindian sovereignty, see C.J. Jaenen, "French Sovereignty and Native Nationhood during the French Regime," Native Studies Review, vol. 2, no. 1 (1986), pp. 98-99.

⁵⁰"Journal de ce qui s'est passé," AC, C11A, vol. 87, NAC, MG 1, microfilm, reel F-87, f. 175. report made on 22 October.

⁵¹Beaucours, "Mémoire de Canada de 1747 [entreprises de Guerre contre les sauvages]," November, 1747, AC, C11A, vol. 87, NAC, MG 1, microfilm, reel F-87, f. 16v.

⁵²"Extrait en forme de journal," AC, C11A, vol. 87, NAC, MG 1, microfilm, reel F-87, ff. 75v-76.

⁵³"Extrait en forme de journal," 1747, AC, C11A, vol. 87, NAC, MG 1, microfilm, reel F-87, f. 185.

A decade later, qualities considered desirable among the allies by the French are indicated by the positive characterizations of several western nations by French metropolitan officers during the Seven Years' War. The Odawa are "de toutes les nations sauvages, la plus docile"⁵⁴ and "toujours été attachées aux Français;"⁵⁵ the Potawatomi "les plus sages et les plus obéissants de tous les sauvages"⁵⁶ and "une des plus braves & des plus attachées à la France;"⁵⁷ and the Menominee "toujours été fort attachés aux intérêts français."⁵⁸

The outcome of French initiatives in the west in 1744-1748 were indicative of the real power wielded by the French in that region. Their war against the British never materialized. Operations against the British at Hudson Bay were contemplated, but were simply not important enough to justify the diversion of the necessary resources. On the other hand, the planned attacks on Pennsylvanian traders on the White River failed since it was Amerindians rather than the French that determined what military

⁵⁴Bougainville, "Journal," p. 273.

⁵⁵Bougainville, "Journal," p. 273.

⁵⁶Bougainville, "Journal," p. 275.

⁵⁷P. Pouchot, Memoires sur la dernière guerre de l'Amérique septentrionale, entre la France et l'Angleterre. Suivis d'Observations, dont plusieurs sont relatives au théâtre actual de la guerre, & de nouveaux détails sur les moeurs & les usages des Sauvages, avec des cartes topographiques, vol. I (Yverdon, 1781), p. 108.

⁵⁸Bougainville, "Journal," p. 208.

actions would take place. Since the Amerindians of Detroit were unwilling to strike at the Pennsylvanians in the White River, French hopes that they would do so remained unfulfilled. When circumstances made it necessary to respond to the initiatives of the coalition, the French were equally unable to engage their allies to fight their battles for them.

c.5 Amerindian and European power in the west, 1744-1748

George Croghan and other private traders from Pennsylvania may have played a role in setting off the conflict between the coalition and the French. Yet subsequent attacks on the French failed to eliminate the French presence from the region. When the conflict began, the influence of the governments of New York and Pennsylvania on the course of the war in the west in 1747 and 1748 was considerable, though negative. Amerindians were dependent upon external support. Since this was most unlikely to be provided by the French, traders or governments from New York or Pennsylvania were the best and only source of logistic support, as well as artillery and technical skills needed to reduce French fortifications. The success or failure of the coalition thus depended to a considerable extent on the action or inaction of the governments of New York and Pennsylvania.

The Anglo-American colonials would not have been displeased by the expulsion of the French from the west, but lacked the

infrastructure needed to exploit the opportunities of 1747. They lacked first a reserve of officers and officials accustomed to negotiations with Amerindians, secondly, a transportation system to rush large quantities of stores to the west, and finally and most importantly, a unified administration with the power to allocate resources and coerce obedience. The speedy arrival of large quantities of arms and munitions from New York or Pennsylvania in the west might have tipped the balance in favour of the coalition. Instead, its absence crippled Amerindian operations against the French. Anglo-American passivity thus hampered coalition activities more than all of the ineffective activity of the French.

Attempts by Amerindians in the west to influence events and exercise power were rather more successful than those of the Anglo-Americans. The nations of the Three Fires Confederacy were not only capable of ignoring French requests, but also of shaping events to further their particular interests.

The Amerindians were able to affect events negatively by withholding cooperation from the French. Their political independence and their demands for European goods gave them the flexibility and the necessity to shift from side to side between the British and the French as necessary. Their ability to refuse French requests to go to war gave them a veto over French military action. At times, they elected to comply with French requests. But

this seeming passivity stemmed not from passivity but indifference. As long as their real concerns lay elsewhere, Amerindians were content to allow the French to lead for as long as their desires did not conflict with Amerindian goals. They were thus quite willing to travel hundreds of kilometres to go to war on the New York frontier, but refused to allow the French to involve them in conflicts closer to home. The French were thus able to mount a successful partisan campaign against New York forts and settlements, while Pennsylvania traders on the White River went about their business undisturbed.

The pro-French element among the Three Fires Confederacy was sufficiently strong that it was able in 1747-1748 to exercise power in the Great Lakes region without resort to force. All that was needed for its influence to be felt was awareness on the part of those whose actions they were seeking to influence of their potential ability to use force. The anti-French coalition that became active in 1747, on the other hand, was never able to make itself perceived as able to influence events, and thus never attracted support of the majority of warriors. The coalition was able to initiate attacks, but unable to defeat the French alone.

The outbreak of the War of the Austrian Succession had confronted the allies with a difficult problem. Some elements reacted by attacking the French, seeking not to expel Europeans from tribal territory, but to replace the French with the English. This

conflict began and ended as the result of Amerindian actions. The French contributed to the outbreak of the war by creating conditions that led Amerindians to consider a violent response, but it was the Amerindians themselves who chose this option.

That these attacks were ultimately unsuccessful was also due to the decisions and actions of Amerindians. The decision of most of the Three Fires to remain neutral, helping neither the French nor the coalition doomed the coalition. They might have decided differently had the coalition captured Niagara, Detroit, or Michilimakinac. But after the coalition had clearly failed, the Three Fires acted to restore the status quo ante by mediating between the French and the coalition, informing the coalition that the time had come to make peace and insisting that the French release their prisoners.

Between 1744 and 1748, New York, Pennsylvania, French, coalition, and the pro-French faction of the Three Fires confederacy attempted to influence events in the west. Of these groups, the Three Fires Confederacy was the most successful. The result of the war was the product of Anglo-American, French, and Amerindian strengths, weaknesses, and actions. Overall, the French remained passive, and succeeded by hanging on in their forts, riding out the storm and awaiting the return of calm. Amerindians played a more active role, as both initiators and terminators of violence.

The greatest French accomplishment in the course of 1747-1748 was

to remain in place, huddled together in their forts against the day that the situation stabilized. The Anglo-Americans were willing to offer assistance, but New York efforts were crippled by wrangles between the executive and the legislature, while Pennsylvania sent only token support. The events in the Great Lakes region in 1744-1748 were a convincing display of the power and independence of Amerindians in general, and of the Three Fires Confederacy in particular. The time was drawing near when they would be displaced by Europeans, but in 1744-1748, there was no doubt as to their status as the paramount power in the Great Lakes region or of their independence from European control. They ultimately held to the French alliance, but did so because it met their needs, not because they were subordinate to their European partners.

c.6 The events of 1744-1748 and Amerindian Independence

Perhaps the most important strength of the Franco-Amerindian alliance was negative. Those Amerindian nations who found that entering into alliance with the French met their particular needs did not feel that their independence was compromised by the presence of the French trading counters and fortified outposts in their traditional territories, and considered the local trader to have "fixed himself in those places we frequent, only to supply our needs."⁵⁹ Amerindian reactions to Europeans in the west were quite

⁵⁹"Secret conference held by the Oneidas, Kaskarorens and Cayugas with our domiciliated Indians at Montreal, on the 23d 8ber, 1754," enclosed in Duquesne to Machault, 31 October, 1754, NYCD,

different when their interests were threatened. In 1763, they felt compelled to launch a general war to protect themselves "against what they considered as the usurpation, by the British, of the hunting grounds which the Great Spirit had given their ancestors."⁶⁰

Amerindian independence was partly the product of the presence of two competing European powers between which the nations of the Great Lakes could manoeuvre, and could be terminated by the elimination of any one of those powers from North America. This independence was a hard reality of the geopolitics of north-eastern North America, and any groups with interests in that region ignored it at their peril. During the war in 1744-1748, they acted as nations who might be influenced by the French, but felt in no way compelled to adhere to their wishes, or to give any indication whatever that they considered anyone but themselves to be masters of their ancestral territory.

A Canadian trader in the Pays d'en haut later recorded two statements that sum up the often precarious relationship that bonded Amerindians and whites in the west. An Ojibwa, in 1788, accused the French, "Vous ne vous inquietez pas beaucoup des Sauvages, pourvu que vous fassiez des paquets." On the other hand, in the following year, another Amerindian informed a trader that

vol. X, p. 269.

⁶⁰Warren, History of the Ojibways, p. 199.

his father "mavoit toujours dit, dès bas-âge, d'avoir de la condessendance pour les blancs. Ce sont eux qui soutiennent les sauvages nous ne vivrions point sans eux."⁶¹ Amerindians were politically independent and in control of their ancestral territories; they employed this independence to secure reliable sources of European goods. By the mid-eighteenth century, dependence on European goods was such that this had become an important factor in Amerindian decision-making. But this growing dependence of Amerindians on European goods did not restrict their freedom of action. Instead, it encouraged political and military independence, since this economic dependence made it imperative that bands have a secure source of supply, rather than holding to alliances with particular European groups. Moreover, dependence on European matériel made Amerindians more, not less, politically independent of any one European colony, since they had to have access to supplies, regardless of the source. If one source failed, they had no choice but to seek another, regardless of previous commitments.

Like the Dutch and British in Europe, the Amerindians of the Great Lakes in the 1740s were heavily dependent upon foreign trade. But since no single European group possessed a monopoly on trade with these nations, the ability of Europeans to translate economic into political power was limited. The divisions of the Europeans

⁶¹Louis P. Cormier, ed., Jean-Baptiste Perrault marchand voyageur parti de Montréal le 28e de mai 1783 (Montreal, 1978), pp. 72, 74

prevented them from enforcing an economic blockade that might have allowed them to take advantage of the economic dependence. The Amerindians of the Great Lakes had four sources of supply of matériel— the Hudson Bay Company, New York and Pennsylvania, Canada, and Louisiana.⁶² Amerindians might be dependent upon European goods, but they were also aware of the existence of alternative sources of supply.

In this particular case, the anti-French factions among the Three Fires, Wyandot, and Miami did not consider themselves unalterably shackled to the French empire by a chain of European goods. Instead, they recognized their dependence on imports, and sought the source that best met their needs. The time would come when Amerindian independence would be eroded by contact with whites, but in the 1740s, dependence of foreign trade did not restrict their freedom of action. Instead, the French were dependent upon Amerindian support to fulfil their goals in the west.

In 1744-1748, as in the past, the Great Lakes region was the territory of Amerindian nations. Physical geography is, by and large, immutable, but an infinite variety exists in the minds of humans whose mental images overlay the landscape. The French, in 1744-1748, thought of the Great Lakes Country as forming a part of their empire. They wrote the documents and drew the maps which

⁶²Even the French in Canada and the French in Louisiana were economic rivals who competed for Amerindian trade.

communicated this belief to a posterity which has by and large accepted French definitions of their empire, and visualized North America in European terms. Whether delineations are described as zones of real control, spheres of influence, or claims to territory, part of the map is coloured pink for the British, the remainder blue, for the French. New France is visualized as a vast French empire, with a metropolis in Montreal and a hinterland in the Great Lakes, Mississippi basin, and the Western Sea.

The French, however, claimed more territory than they controlled. New France, strictly speaking, was limited to the Laurentian valley. The French could no more claim to dominate the west than the Iroquois could claim to rule the Laurentian valley by virtue of the enclaves at Kanesatake and Kahnawake. To ascend the St. Lawrence or Ottawa rivers beyond Montreal was to leave the realm of Louis XV and enter the dominions of Amerindians who were firmly in control of their ancestral territory. Within that territory, the French enjoyed economic cooperation and military alliance, when and only when it was in the interests of the native peoples. The French might exercise a certain influence on occasion, but the final decision and freedom of action lay with the Amerindians. These decisions, made by Amerindians for their own reasons and according to their own priorities were the most important determinant of the course of events in the Great Lakes region. They determined which French initiatives, such as Amerindian participation in the war against New England and New York in the central theatre, would

succeed, and which, like the French attempt to expel the Pennsylvanians from the banks of the White River, would fail.

c.7 The events of 1744-1748 in Amerindian historiography

The independence of the Amerindians of the Great Lakes is reflected in their historiography. European histories of events in the west are dominated by their interactions with Amerindians, which makes it appear as if the European-Amerindian relations were the most important phenomena in the west. Amerindians, however, had a different point of view. Each Amerindian band was at the centre of a network of relationships with surrounding groups— whether of military and economic alliance, shared membership in a tribe or confederacy, or hostility— and was itself divided into a mosaic of interest groups. The Franco-Amerindian component of these internal and external relationships was small, a state which is reflected in the minor role of the French in Amerindian traditional history.

During the nineteenth century, four members of the constituent tribes of the Three Fires confederacy published histories and descriptions of their nations, based upon oral traditions. They were able to record a history of events that contemporary Amerindians considered to be important. Although these histories deal extensively with military events. they scarcely mention the Anglo-French wars of the mid-eighteenth century that loom so large in Euroamerican historiography. Instead, they narrate the events of

the struggles of the Three Fires with the Mascouten, Iroquois, and Dakota. Among the Ojibwa of the Lake Superior area, the 1740s were remembered as the period when the Bear Clan established the first Ojibwa enclave on Lac Coutereille (one of the Wisconsin Rice Lakes), formerly held by the Dakota, and began the occupation of the Wisconsin and Chippewa river valleys.⁶³

The oral tradition may have contained more information on the Anglo-French wars. But a more plausible explanation is that they did not consider their participation in these wars to be of great significance. Even though they fought as allies of the French, they were not in pursuit of their own geopolitical goals. French wars waged for French purposes, appear to have held scant interest for Anishinabeg historians.⁶⁴ Once the Anglo-French wars had a direct impact on the Three Fires Confederacy, their records of events become very detailed indeed.

The notion that their titanic struggle for control of North America held little interest for contemporary Amerindians might be disconcerting to the British and French, but it is a perspective that cannot be ignored if one wishes to attempt to come to some understanding of events in North America in the mid-eighteenth century.

⁶³Warren, History of the Ojibways, pp. 190-193.

⁶⁴See D. Peter MacLeod, "The Anishinabeg Point of View: The History of North America to 1800 in nineteenth century Odawa and Ojibwa Historiography," Canadian Historical Review (forthcoming).

c.8 Amerindians and Europeans in the Great Lakes region

The events of 1744-1748 reveal more about the Franco-Amerindian relationship and the exercise of power in the Great Lakes region than they affected the course of future events. The outbreak of violence in 1747 appears to have done no long-term harm to the alliance. Neither in Europe nor North America were alliances engraved in stone at one point in time. Amerindian alliances were continually reconfirmed and renewed, and these renewals provided a mechanism for leaving quarrels behind and making a fresh start.

If the events of 1747 revealed the vulnerability of the alliance, they are also indicative of the strength of the bonds that linked the French and Amerindians of the Great Lakes. In 1748, the alliance was renewed, and it survived to be a source of strength to the French in the Seven Years' War, the last and greatest of the wars of New France. If this war ultimately ended in failure for the French, it was not lost for want of Amerindian support.⁶⁵

The French defeat marked the beginning of the end of Amerindian hegemony in the Great Lakes region. The Seven Years' War expelled the French from the mainland of North America, and left the British with an effective monopoly on relations with the Amerindians of the

⁶⁵Once again, however, Amerindians cooperated with the French only on their own terms, and exercised considerable independence. see D. Peter MacLeod, "Muskets and Microbes: Smallpox and the Participation of the Amerindian Allies of New France in the Seven Years' War, Ethnohistory, 1991 (forthcoming).

Great Lakes. Unlike the French, the British, who had sent massive reinforcements to North America during the Seven Years' War, possessed both the will and the armed strength to establish a lodgment by force in the Great Lakes region. The period of hostilities passed, and the Three Fires soon established a relationship with the British that was strikingly similar to that which they enjoyed with the French. Yet the American Revolution produced a stream of loyalist refugees many of whom migrated to Amerindian territory north of Lake Ontario. To the south of the Lakes, American settlers, unchecked by the British, pressed relentlessly westward. The cession of the ancestral territories of the Amerindians of the Great Lakes had begun, and would not end until their ancestral homelands were entirely engulfed by the colonies and nation states of European North America.

Yet in 1748, this was unforeseen. In the mid-eighteenth century, the events of 1744-1748 left no doubt as to which group dominated the Great Lakes region. This land might be claimed by the French as part of their somewhat nebulous "empire" and its inhabitants described as if they were rather recalcitrant French provincials, but real power in the Great Lakes region remained in the hands of the indigenous Amerindians. They themselves, not the French and not the Anglo-Americans, were most able to influence, and indeed control, the course of events within their ancestral territories. Before the end of the century, this would change, but in 1744-1748, the Odawas, Ojibwas, and Potawatomis of the Three Fires Confederacy

remained the paramount powers in the Great Lakes region.

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