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New Light on the Philadelphia Mutiny of 1783: Federal-State Confrontation at the Close of the War for Independence

LATE in life, Federalist Timothy Pickering made a habit of putting on paper any historical or political tidbit which confirmed his bias about the evils of things Jeffersonian. A conversation with Richard Peters, an old friend and fellow revolutionary, inspired him to record some remarks about an event thirty-five years into the past: the two-week mutiny at Philadelphia in June 1783. Had Pennsylvania Supreme Executive Council President John Dickinson called up the militia on that occasion, Pickering argued in his notebook, Philadelphia would have remained the capital of the United States; America would have saved not only the millions it had wasted by building Washington, D. C., but would also have avoided the disastrous measures adopted during the presidencies of Thomas Jefferson and James Madison.[1]

[1] Vol. 51, p. 236, Timothy Pickering Papers, Massachusetts Historical Society. Pickering was stationed at Newburgh in the spring of 1783 and went to Philadelphia with the soldiers sent to restore order. Part of the research for this article was conducted under a grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities. The author wishes to thank Paul Smith, Richard Kohn, and Joseph Davis for their help.

The climax of the mutiny had occurred on June 21, 1783. On that day a few hundred soldiers, primarily of the Continental Army's Pennsylvania Line, acting on their own initiative, had demonstrated at the State House. The demonstration was only the last and most public scene in several months of dramatic disturbance within the Continental Army. But its importance to the latter phases of the Revolution was considerable. It brought about the first major confrontation between a state and the United States government. It raised the question of how much police power republican governments should exert. It resulted in the departure of Congress from Philadelphia after years of futile attempts to do so. It convinced some Americans of the necessity of Congress having exclusive jurisdiction over any place which eventually became the permanent capital of the new country. And most importantly, it killed the ailing movement within Congress for a stronger federal government.

Peters, an important figure in the events surrounding the mutiny, had not been convinced in 1783 that Dickinson and Pennsylvania rather than Congress was to blame for Congress leaving Philadelphia. Peters believed then that the question of responsibility would "always remain a Matter of Opinion upon which each may decide from possibly opposite Motives."[2] However, most other supporters of a stronger Congress at the time, who did not suffer Peters' conflict of interest as a Pennsylvanian in Congress, blamed Dickinson. Historians, too, have generally shared Pickering's view and the June 21 demonstration has come to symbolize the weakness of Congress under the Articles of Confederation. They have repeated the story of disgruntled Continental soldiers surrounding an insolvent and impotent Congress which could not even convince the State of Pennsylvania to protect it.[3] The symbolism is justified; but

[2] Undelivered Motion, [July 26–30], 1783, Edmund C. Burnett, ed., *Letters of Members of the Continental Congress* (Washington, 1921–1938), VII, 329–330, hereinafter cited as *LMCC*. See note 64 below for my dating of this document.

[3] The most detailed account of the mutiny is Varnum L. Collins, *The Continental Congress at Princeton* (Princeton, 1908). Collins portrays a Congress unsupported by Pennsylvania. Louis C. Hatch, *The Administration of the American Revolutionary Army* (New York, 1904) is shorter but more balanced in its interpretation. Most recently, H. James Henderson, *Party Politics in the Continental Congress* (New York, 1974), recognizes the complexities surrounding the mutiny, but writes as if Congress were in session during the demonstration and as if there were no connection at all between the centralists and the soldiers.

the evidence[4] shows that Congress was not the object of the demonstration and that Congress and its supporters attempted to use the incident to assert the authority and even the supremacy of the federal government at a time when public support for Congress was dissipating rapidly. As for John Dickinson, he had refused to be intimidated by either Congress or the mutinous soldiers.

The Philadelphia Mutiny grew out of the troubles which confronted the United States during the spring of 1783. Its immediate origins lay in the dangerous question of how to disband the Army and settle the complex financial accounts of the soldiers. After the dark days of 1780, when the war for independence almost collapsed, such centralists in Congress and the states as James Madison, Alexander Hamilton, Elias Boudinot, Charles Thomson, Richard Peters, Oliver Ellsworth, Gouverneur Morris and John Dickinson had a renewed opportunity to strengthen the central government. ("Centralist" is used here in preference to "nationalist" because only a vocal minority of them sought a national government, supreme over the states. The idea of a national government was not popular with Americans in 1783 and the term was generally avoided.) By 1783, with peace at hand and the value of a strong central government more subject to public doubt, their program was ailing and their leader, Robert Morris, was threatening to resign as

[4] Several of the major actors in the mutiny left accounts. The undated four-page account of Elias Boudinot, President of Congress, is among his papers at the Library of Congress, hereinafter, Boudinot Account. Alexander Hamilton, chairman of the congressional committee to treat with Pennsylvania, placed two reports on the *Journals of Congress* on July 1, 1783. In addition he recorded his view of the mutiny (based for the most part on the minutes which he kept and which are no longer extant) in a lengthy September 1783 letter to John Dickinson, the extant part of which is in Harold C. Syrett and Jacob E. Cooke, eds., *The Papers of Alexander Hamilton* (New York, 1961—), III, 438–458, hereinafter, Hamilton Account. John Dickinson gave his version of the mutiny in a message to the Pennsylvania Assembly dated Aug. 18, 1783, which is in *Colonial Records* [of Pennsylvania] (Philadelphia, 1852–1853), XIII, 654–666, hereinafter, Dickinson Account. A draft of the message in the R. R. Logan Dickinson Papers, Historical Society of Pennsylvania (HSP), varies only slightly from the published version. Col. Richard Humpton, commander of the Philadelphia Barracks, sent his account to the President of Congress in late June 1783; it is in RG 360, Item 38, folios 3–[10], National Archives and Records Service, hereinafter, Humpton Account.

Superintendent of Finance. A clear sense of constitutional crisis gripped Congress at Philadelphia and spread throughout the Union. The crisis involved Robert Morris and legislative versus executive supremacy within the federal government; the power of the federal government in relationship to the states; the belief that Philadelphia was a modern Capua, ridden with luxury and political corruption; the newspaper publication of secret documents released by a congressman; the threat of military intervention in civilian affairs; and a host of immediate problems to be solved by the new country. Congressman James Madison had predicted in February that the next six months would determine whether the Revolution would end in "prosperity and tranquility, or *confusion and disunion*."[5] The overriding question was whether or not, in the wake of peace, the states could be held together in anything more than a symbolic union.

In desperation, some centralists used certain disgruntled army officers and other public creditors in what became known as the Newburgh Conspiracy. Commander-in-Chief George Washington was deeply disturbed by the uprising at Newburgh, particularly because he believed civilians at Philadelphia were responsible. One of the resolutions adopted by the officers, after Washington's masterful coup-de-grace to the conspiracy, declared an unshaken confidence in Congress and a conviction that it would not disband or *disperse* the Army until the accounts of both officers and soldiers were settled. "I fix it as an *indispensable* Measure," Washington informed a congressman, "that previous to the Disbanding of the Army, all their accounts should be completely liquidated and settled." Washington also warned his former aide-de-camp Alexander Hamilton, the congressman with whom he had the most confidential correspondence, that "unhappy consequences would follow" any attempt by Congress to disband the troops or separate the Lines prior to a settlement.[6]

In a series of decisions, however, the centralists acted in Congress

[5] Madison to Edmund Randolph, Feb. 25, 1783, William T. Hutchinson, *et. al.*, eds., *The Papers of James Madison* (Chicago, 1962—), VI, 286, hereinafter, *Madison Papers*.

[6] Washington to Theodorick Bland, Apr. 4, 1783, Washington to Hamilton, Apr. 4, 16, 1783, John C. Fitzpatrick, ed., *The Writings of George Washington* (Washington, 1931–1944), XXVI, 285–296, 342.

to disperse the Army prior to a settlement. Robert Morris considered a settlement of accounts for thousands of soldiers before the expensive Army was disbanded to be totally out of the question. The settlement involved the different laws and procedures of the states, Congress, and various departments within the Army. In addition to back pay and cash bounties, the government of the United States and the several states had to consider tax free land titles, clothing allowances, and other rations in the computations. Each soldier needed to be treated individually because the accounts varied enormously. Morris knew they would take years to settle, and he held to his position adamantly, pointing out that the longer the Army was retained, the less likely it would be to go home peacefully. Hamilton recommended Morris' position to Congress on May 23, but Congress balked. Three days later Hamilton, without the support of Morris, proposed and Congress adopted a compromise. Instead of an immediate disbandment, the troops which had enlisted for the duration of the war (but not those which had enlisted for a three-year term) would be furloughed to their homes, pending a discharge once the definitive treaty of peace had been ratified. There was neither provision for a settlement of accounts nor even a word of appreciation for the soldiers.[7]

Washington shared the disgust of the officers at Newburgh when he ordered the furlough without settlement on June 2. Three days later Major General William Heath, commander of the Army's Eastern Department, presented Washington with a moderate, reasoned "Address of the Generals and Officers Commanding the Regiments and Corps" which implored him as their friend and general to intervene with Congress. The address asserted that the furlough was a ploy by Congress to avoid a settlement. The officers urged him to amend his June 2 order to make acceptance of furloughs voluntary. Washington replied immediately, assuring the officers that Congress had done everything in its power to obtain justice for them but that the states had not complied with its requests. Nevertheless, in a rare showing of independence from

7 Worthington C. Ford, *et. al.*, eds., *Journals of the Continental Congress, 1774–1789* (Washington, 1904–1937), XXIV, 358, 364; E. James Ferguson, *The Power of the Purse* (Chapel Hill, 1961), 179–181; Morris to Hamilton, Peters, and Nathaniel Gorham, May 15, 1783, *Hamilton Papers*, III, 356–361; Morris Diary, May 27, 1783, Robert Morris Papers, Library of Congress (DLC).

Congress, made possible only because of the provisional articles of peace, Washington adopted the suggestion of his officers and issued orders declaring that each soldier could decide for himself whether or not to accept furloughs. Washington transmitted the memorial and his response to Congress with a covering letter indicating his support for the officers. Washington's letter with its enclosures reached Congress on June 11 and was referred to a committee which recommended on June 19 that Congress agree to Washington's variation respecting furloughs. Congress so resolved; but it is clear from the events which transpired that some highly placed civilians and military officials disapproved and sought to conceal Washington's concession from soldiers in Pennsylvania.[8]

While Washington had for the second time in less than three months prevented an explosion at Army Headquarters, there were junior officers of the Pennsylvania Line in Philadelphia who were not to be calmed. Sergeant James Bennett was walking on Second Street early in June when he was stopped by two officers of his Line, Lieutenant John Sullivan, an Irishman, and Captain Henry Carbery, a Marylander. The latter had been on inactive service following a settlement with Pennsylvania after the Line's serious 1781 Mutiny. The two men took Bennett into the Doctor Franklin Tavern and told him they understood that Congress had recently adopted a yet-to-be published resolution dismissing the Army without a settlement of its accounts. They said that the only way to obtain a settlement was for the Line to take up arms in its own behalf, and, if the soldiers would do this, Carbery and Sullivan promised to lead the men to a place where they would receive the justice due them. Partly as a result of this meeting, rumor of a dispersal without settlement spread among the soldiers stationed at Philadelphia.[9]

Confirmation of the rumor came with the arrival of the furloughed Maryland Line from Newburgh on the night of June 12,

[8] Pickering to Samuel Hodgdon, June 7, 1783, Pickering Papers, XXXIV, 207; Washington to Morris, June 3, 1783, Washington, General Orders, June 2, 6, 1783, Fitzpatrick, *Washington*, XXVI, 463–467, 471–472; John Pierce to Morris, June 6, 1783, Washington to Boudinot, June 7, 1783, with enclosures, RG 360, Item 165, folio 653, Item 152, Vol. XI, folio 295; Ford, *Journals*, XXIV, 403.

[9] Francis B. Heitman, *Historical Register of Officers of the Continental Army* (Washington, 1914), 143, 527; Deposition of Sgt. James Bennett, July 1, 1783, RG 360, Item 38, folios 65–[66].

and the belated announcement of the furlough (but not Washington's modification of it) the next morning. This was too much for the war-hardened soldiers, most of whom had not received any cash pay since 1782 and some of whom were veterans of the 1781 mutiny. A board of sergeants immediately submitted a mutinous memorial to Congress declaring "We will not accept your furloughs and demand a settlement." Congress was indignant and referred the matter to Secretary at War Benjamin Lincoln, who along with General Arthur St. Clair, commander of the Continental troops in Pennsylvania, immediately took "prudent and soothing measures." St. Clair issued Washington's order on June 6 suspending furloughs for any men who chose not to accept them. Most of the dissatisfied soldiers at Philadelphia (unlike the soldiers at Newburgh) refused furloughs, just as the men who had suppressed the order expected, and remained mutinous. They disobeyed orders to march to barracks in small towns well outside the state and federal capital. Even as the Maryland Line, which had supported the June 13 memorial to Congress, went home, veterans of the Pennsylvania Line who had been serving in the Southern Army arrived by ship from Charleston, South Carolina.[10]

Meanwhile Sergeant Christian Nagle, a seven-year veteran of the Line stationed at Lancaster, received anonymous letters from Philadelphia, apparently written by Lieutenant Sullivan. The letters communicated the designs of the troops at the capital. Nagle shared the news with other soldiers, insisting that justice would never be done unless they took matters into their own hands. Thus, when the officers announced the furlough without a settlement (but not Washington's moderation of it) at Lancaster on the evening of June 16, the angry men were prepared. Armed soldiers, primarily inexperienced recruits, set out the next morning for Philadelphia to join the mutiny already in progress.[11]

[10] Humpton Account, folio 3–[6]; John Armstrong to Horatio Gates, June 16, 1783, LMCC, VII, 189–190n; "Notes on Debates," June 13, 1783, Madison to Edmund Randolph, June 17, 1783, *Madison Papers*, VII, 141, 158–159; Collins, *Princeton*, 10.

[11] Collins, *Princeton*, 14; Richard Butler to Dickinson, William Henry to Dickinson, June 17, 1783, RG 360, Item 38, folios 37, 123; Affidavit of Benjamin Spyker, Jr., June 28, 1783, Samuel Hazard, ed., *Pennsylvania Archives*, Series I (Philadelphia, 1852–1856), X, 577. Spyker's affidavit is an account of what he heard Sgt. Christian Nagle declare about the mutiny after Nagle fled to Berks County. It is not clear about the timing of events, it is second hand, and little of its bravado is supported by other documentation.

On Thursday, June 19, Pennsylvania President John Dickinson left the State House and hurried to the office of his friend Robert Morris for advice. It was common practice for centralists such as Dickinson to consult with their leader. Congress had recently given Morris a vote of confidence and he had not resigned. Although his influence had declined, he remained the man one went to see if one sought results.[12] Even though Dickinson was the governor of a state, he had always been deeply committed to a strong central government. In response to the centralists' calls for strengthening the Union during the spring of 1783, Dickinson was preparing at the time of the mutiny a series of proposals to make to the powerful Pennsylvania Assembly at its next session in August. He would support federal taxation and commercial regulations.[13]

On this visit to Morris' office, Dickinson was worried about two letters he had just received by express from Lancaster reporting that armed soldiers were on the road to Philadelphia. The letters asserted that the mutiny had originated at the capital, that the soldiers planned to rob the Bank of North America for their pay, and that they would likely be joined by men stationed at York. Dickinson asked Morris what should be done. Call up the local militia immediately, Morris advised. Dickinson returned to the State House where the Council had sent the letters downstairs to a Congress which, given peace, was rapidly declining in both attendance and public opinion.[14]

Congress appointed a committee of three prominent allies of Morris to confer with Pennsylvania and to take appropriate measures. Pennsylvania's Richard Peters, Connecticut's sole delegate Oliver Ellsworth, and New York's sole delegate Alexander Hamilton, a freshman member, who, like Peters, was considered a military expert, composed the committee. President of Congress Elias Boudinot needed a chairman on whom he could rely and he appointed Hamilton. The two men were not only centralists but also personal friends; Hamilton had spent his first year in America a decade earlier in Boudinot's Elizabethtown, New Jersey, home.[15]

12 Morris Diary, May 3, June 19, 1783; Ford, *Journals*, XXIV, 284–285.

13 Dickinson to Charles Thomson, June 12, 1783, Thomson Papers, DLC.

14 Butler to Dickinson, Henry to Dickinson, June 17, 1783, RG 360, Item 38, folios 37, 123; Council Minutes, June 19, 1783, *Colonial Records*, XIII, 603.

15 Ford, *Journals*, XXIV, 402–405n; Broadus Mitchell, *Alexander Hamilton, Youth to Maturity, 1755–1788* (New York, 1957), Chapter 4.

Frustrated by the feebleness of Congress, the twenty-seven-year-old Hamilton assumed the lead in the unfolding drama. From at least Saturday night until Tuesday, he, rather than Congress or its President, would determine the response of the federal government in its dealings with Pennsylvania.

For the temperate Dickinson the crisis of a state presidency was at hand. His reputation as the first intercolonial Revolutionary hero had suffered after he refused to sign the Declaration of Independence, and the attacks against his character when he stood for the Council in 1782 (while serving as President of Delaware) had been so vicious as to stain his character even to the present. With his reputation at stake, he paid close attention to public opinion throughout the mutiny and its aftermath. Neither he nor the finally victorious Republican Party of Pennsylvania, which he represented, could afford to mishandle the affair. It did not wish to give ammunition to its opponents just prior to the all-important October 1783 election of the first Council of Censors, a body which had the authority to propose changes in the state Constitution opposed by the Republicans. Thus the local political situation acted to fortify Dickinson's caution. His strategy throughout the mutiny was moderation rather than force, aimed at cooling passions and preventing bloodshed. As an advocate of restraint Dickinson clashed with Hamilton during the mutiny itself and in their official versions of what had occurred. As a result, he was seen as a champion of states' rights and his reputation suffered even more.[16]

When the Hamilton Committee met with Dickinson and the Council on Thursday afternoon, Hamilton recommended that Pennsylvania use its militia to disperse the soldiers, or at least keep them on the west bank of the Schuylkill River. But Council opposed the use of force until an outrage had been committed. It was uncertain that the city militia, men who several years earlier had joined a mob attack on the home of James Wilson, could be relied upon to take up arms against soldiers whom they credited with having secured independence. A call of the militia which was disobeyed

[16] Robert L. Brunhouse, *The Counter-Revolution in Pennsylvania, 1776–1790* (Harrisburg, 1942), Chapters 2–4; Madison to Randolph, June 30, 1783, *Madison Papers*, VII, 205–207; Elias to Elisha Boudinot, June 23, 1783, *LMCC*, VII, 195. I am indebted to Milton E. Flower, Dickinson's biographer, for sharing insights into his subject's personality.

would hazard the authority of the state (and the reputation of Dickinson). Besides, it took time to put the militia in readiness. Finally, Council reasoned, the soldiers claimed they had come to Philadelphia only for a settlement of accounts due them, and there was no proof that they intended violence. Therefore, after mature deliberation, Council resolved that "the language of invitation, and good humour became more advisable than any immediate exertion of authority."[17] Pennsylvania, which had exclusive jurisdiction over affairs within its boundaries, had made its decision; Congress, which had no jurisdiction over the capital of the United States at Philadelphia, had to obey Pennsylvania's decision.

Hamilton was astonished by Pennsylvania's response. Consequently, he ordered Assistant Secretary at War William Jackson to use every effort short of force to keep the soldiers from entering the city. Jackson first consulted Robert Morris and then rode out to the troops. The soldiers from Lancaster, numbering about seventy to eighty men after desertion along the route, were not convinced.[18]

On Friday morning, June 20, the soldiers, under the command of Sergeant Nagle, marched into the Philadelphia Barracks where Congress' War Office had made special provision for them. As the day wore on, several events fanned dissatisfaction among the Philadelphia and Lancaster troops. Assistant Paymaster Philip Audibert informed the barracks commander, Colonel Richard Humpton, that he had received orders that no soldiers were to be given any more payroll certificates—which Morris offered as part of the furlough in lieu of cash for three months pay—unless they also accepted the terms of Congress' furlough as it stood prior to Washington's modification. The order was illegal since Congress had approved Washington's modification the day before.

Who issued the inflammatory order to Audibert is uncertain. Secretary at War Lincoln and Paymaster General John Pierce were not in Philadelphia at the time, and it would have been uncharacteristic for Assistant Secretary at War Jackson to take the initiative. The order must have come from the Office of the Superintendent of

17 Ford, *Journals*, XXIV, 413–414; Council Minutes, June 20, 1783, XIII, 603; Dickinson Account, 654.

18 Hamilton to Jackson, June 19, 1783, *Hamilton Papers*, III, 397; Morris Diary, June 19, 1783.

Finance. Audibert and Jackson had consulted Robert Morris about the soldiers apparently before the order was issued, but Morris, who supported pay certificates even for those refusing furlough, denied responsibility the next morning.[19]

Most likely the order was issued by the man who shared Morris' office, birthday, and political philosophy, Assistant Superintendent of Finance Gouverneur Morris. Gouverneur enjoyed intrigue, and was a "person of no principle, a downright Machiavelian Politician," according to a contemporary. Indeed, Washington pointed to him as the man who had built the "groundwork of the superstructure" that became the Newburgh Conspiracy. Gouverneur Morris had reflected two months after Newburgh that he was "content . . . *again to labor and to hazard* but neither time nor circumstance *will permit anything now.*"[20] The Philadelphia Mutiny provided another circumstance for intrigue and his role in it points to him as the man who probably instructed Audibert.

By evening the troops at the barracks were more restive than at any time since their memorial to Congress a week earlier. All were openly upset by the order to stop their back pay. In addition, the Lancaster men considered ridiculous and insulting a decision by the Hamilton Committee and Robert Morris earlier in the day that they be paid only upon their return to Lancaster. In the midst of this tension, Hamilton, Jackson, and Gouverneur Morris visited the soldiers at the barracks. Some soldiers believed the three came in their official capacities, perhaps even on higher authority. Apparently

19 Humpton Account, folios [6]–7; Morris Diary, June 17, 20, 21, 1783 (Morris' statement about pay for the soldiers in the diary on June 7 meant that those who accepted furlough should be paid first); Dickinson Account, 654; "Vox Populi," (Philadelphia) *Freeman's Journal*, July 23, 1783. The author of this important piece was someone who apparently had access to the soldiers, Congress, and the Council. Col. Humpton, who was sympathetic to the soldiers, is the most likely person because the article is similar in its coverage to the account which he submitted to Congress and both place great emphasis on the events which drove the soldiers to their action. Congress was critical of Humpton's furlough of the soldiers after the mutiny and he had good reason to be annoyed with that body. Another possible author is John Armstrong, Jr., the author of the Newburgh Addresses and the Secretary to Council at the time of the mutiny.

20 William Gordon to Gates, Feb. 26, 1783, *Massachusetts Historical Society Proceedings*, LXIII, 488; Washington to Hamilton, Apr. 16, 1783, *Hamilton Papers*, III, 330; Morris to Gen. Nathaniel Greene, May 18, 1783, Greene Papers, DLC.

Gouverneur Morris took the lead in the meeting, allegedly urging the troops to accept the unamended original furlough even though it did not provide for a settlement of accounts, and promising the men one month's pay in *cash* so that they could go home in a "genteel manner." Imagine, the soldiers later complained to the Pennsylvania Council, the feelings of those "sons of liberty who have freed their country from Tyranny, and secured America's Independence and a honorable peace" upon hearing the "generous expressions of that honorable gentleman."[21] The visit quieted the troops only in the sense that it convinced the doubters that drastic action was necessary.[22] Before the soldiers went to sleep Friday night, Carberry and Sullivan spent fifteen minutes talking to Nagle and a few other sergeants outside the barracks.[23]

On Saturday June 21 Dickinson again visited Robert Morris. Morris repeated his recommendation for a militia call on the grounds that the authority and dignity of the United States were threatened. At 12:30 the long drum roll to assemble sounded at the barracks. Edgy officers hastily abandoned their mess. The soldiers refused orders to disband, and soon marched out of the barracks under the command of sergeants. Supposedly known only to a few, their destination was the State House six blocks away. Their plan, one of the sergeants swore later, was to obtain authority from President Dickinson and General St. Clair to appoint a committee to represent them in settling their accounts with Pennsylvania. The soldiers knew that Congress would not be meeting since it was Saturday, and that only their state's Supreme Executive Council would be in session at the State House. The decision to turn to the state for redress was more than a reaction to their treatment by Congress a week earlier and by the federal officials the night before. It was a realistic assessment of the constitutional and financial realities of

21 Address of the Mutineers, RG 360, Item 38, folios 33–[34]; Ford, *Journals*, XXIV, 414–415; Spyker Affidavit, 577–578.

22 Humpton later informed Congress that the soldiers appeared "a little easier" the next morning (Humpton Account, folio 7), and assured Gouverneur Morris in the presence of Robert Morris that, contrary to anonymous newspaper reports, the visit had quieted the troops. Morris Diary, Sept. 2, 1783.

23 Deposition of Sgt. Solomon Townsend, July 2, 1783, RG 360, Item 38, folio 49–[50].

the United States in 1783: Pennsylvania was simply wealthier and more important than the federal government.[24]

The Council, with Dickinson presiding, had just convened when it heard the approaching drum rolls and piping fifes. Soon about thirty well-ordered troops with fixed bayonets under the command of Sergeant John Robinson came into view below the Council Chamber windows. The soldiers formed in front of the State House and delivered to the Council, by way of its secretary, a crude note demanding authority to appoint new officers for the purpose of assuming command and redressing grievances. Dickinson and the Council were allowed twenty minutes to comply "or otherwise we shall instantly let in those injured soldiers upon you and abide by the consequences." The note was penned by either Sullivan or Carbery. While the Council was in the process of unanimously rejecting the demands, about 250 more armed soldiers under the command of Sergeant Nagle arrived. They posted sentries at the State House doors and at the avenues surrounding the building; they had previously left others at the munitions store houses throughout the city. However, the soldiers allowed free entry and exit from the State House.[25]

Meanwhile, congressmen were gathering in their chamber on the first floor of the State House, most probably arriving between the two groups of soldiers. They had been summoned into emergency session on thirty minutes notice. President Boudinot issued the summons at the suggestion of Hamilton who reported that the soldiers were in an ugly mood and might rob the Bank that evening.[26]

24 Morris Diary, June 21, 1783; Humpton Account, folio 7; Deposition of Sgt. Richard Murthwaite, June 30, 1783, RG 360, Item 38, folio [74]. Hamilton was unwilling to give the soldiers credit for understanding the constitutional and financial realities of 1783 America, stating that they turned to Pennsylvania because of either "artifice or confusion of ideas" (Hamilton Account, 456). The soldiers, however, knew that their State would play a vital role in the settlement of accounts. It had promised them various bounties throughout the war in land, money, and rations as inducements to enlist or remain in service; particularly after 1780, Pennsylvania had assumed the pay of its Line, sometimes following specific requests from Congress. By 1783 Pennsylvania had issued $1,673,000 to its Line. *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography*, XXVII (1903), 504; Ferguson, *Purse*, 180–181.

25 Dickinson Account, 655; Council Minutes, June 21, 1783, XIII, 605; Murthwaite Deposition, June 30, 1783, folio [50]; Townsend Deposition, July 2, 1783, folio [74]; Chevalier de La Luzerne to Comte de Vergennes, June 21, 1783, Correspondence Politique, Etats-Unis, XXIV, microfilm, DLC.

26 Boudinot Account, [1]; "Vox Populi," *Freeman's Journal*, July 23, 1783.

Did Hamilton knowingly send Congress into the midst of an armed confrontation or did he merely want Congress in session to discuss the mood of the soldiers?

The weight of the evidence, particularly the timing of Boudinot's summons, indicates that Hamilton either knew or surmised what was about to happen when he convinced Boudinot to call the session.[27] No delegates indicated that they arrived at the State House after the soldiers, but a business firm stated that they "assembled in their Chamber after the Soldiery had beset the State House." Dickinson's account carries more weight because it was a report to the Pennsylvania Assembly and because no spokesman for the United States, Hamilton in particular, ever denied it: "Upon the alarm the members were specially ["hastily" in the draft version] summoned by their President, and at the place to which the soldiers were moving. For what purpose they were so summoned, we have not been informed."[28]

Hamilton's motives, at least in part, can be surmised. The prospect of Continental troops petitioning their state rather than Congress for redress was not a flattering one for the centralists, and the demonstration provided them with an opportunity to once again assert the claims of Congress. Hamilton knew as well as anyone the antimilitary bias of Americans and hoped perhaps that a military demonstration against Congress would be the source of badly needed public support for the federal government. Although there is no evidence to show that Hamilton intended to stimulate

[27] The problem is to be precise about the timing of Boudinot's summons and the troop assembly. Boudinot officially informed Washington three hours after the summons that he had called Congress to meet at one P.M.; Humpton officially informed Congress later that the troops assembled at twelve-thirty. Thus Hamilton, who insisted to Dickinson that he had prompt intelligence of the soldiers' activities during the mutiny, could have known of the demonstration, in addition to the general restlessness, prior to the summons. In his postmortem notes on the mutiny, Boudinot—and the question of a cover-up must be raised—stated that he summoned Congress at twelve to meet at twelve-thirty, making it impossible for either Hamilton or himself to have known that the troops had assembled. His still later claim in a private letter that the soldiers decided to march on the State House after learning of his summons is not only unconfirmed but also ignores the fact that the soldiers paid no attention to the congressmen during the demonstration. Boudinot to Washington, 4 P.M., June 21, 1783, Boudinot to the Ministers Plenipotentiary at Paris, July 15, 1783, *LMCC*, VII, 193, 222; Humpton Account, folio 7; Hamilton Account, 444–445; Boudinot Account, [1].

[28] Chaloner and White to ————, June 22, 1783, Chaloner and White Letter Book, HSP; Dickinson Account, 665.

such an outburst when he, along with Gouverneur Morris and Jackson, had visited the men at the barracks the evening before, he apparently saw the opportunity on Saturday and quickly manufactured a confrontation.

At least two congressmen from each of six states and one from a seventh state came to the special session. The second delegate from the seventh state never arrived, and Congress never achieved a quorum. The constitutional body known as "Congress" was consequently never surrounded or even threatened on June 21. No entry was placed on the Journals, and the congressmen within the building quickly realized that they were not the object of the demonstrators. Dickinson, however, carried the soldiers' demand and Council's unanimous rejection of it downstairs to the congressmen. He explained the difficulties involved in calling the militia and offered his opinion that unless some outrage on persons or property was committed it should not be called out. Dickinson returned to the Council Chamber. Congressman Ralph Izard proposed that the congressmen leave the building, but it was agreed instead that they would remain until three o'clock, the usual time of Congress' weekday adjournment. The ignored congressmen further decided, should a quorum form, not to transact any business whatsoever, and in particular not to accept any propositions directed to them by the soldiers, should any be sent.

Meanwhile, General St. Clair worked out an agreement with the soldiers to end the demonstration. He asked the Council if it would attend a conference with a committee of commissioned and decommissioned (this would include Carbery) officers, to be appointed by the soldiers? St. Clair believed the soldiers might be prevailed upon to return to the barracks if the Council so agreed. Dickinson returned to the congressmen and inquired of Boudinot if it was agreeable with them for the Council to hold the conference proposed by St. Clair. The President of Congress declared it was. Whereupon the Council consented to receive a state of claims from the soldiers "if decently expressed and constitutionally presented."[29]

[29] Council Minutes, June 21, 1783, XIII, 605; Hamilton to Clinton, June 29, 1783, *Hamilton Papers*, III, 407; Boudinot Account, [1]; Madison, Notes on Debates, June 21, 1783, Virginia Delegates to Gov. Benjamin Harrison, June 24, 1783, *Madison Papers*, VII, 176–177, 189–191. The implication of Madison's notes is that Congress was in session and it is the prime source of that misinformation.

Since the arrival of the first soldiers, citizens had been massing at the State House. Liquor from taverns in the area was widely served and excitement mounted. Congressman James Madison observed that while "no danger from premeditated violence was apprehended," the drinking might lead "to hasty excess." As the soldiers got drunk they cursed loudly and occasionally pointed bayonetted muskets at the first floor windows a few inches above their heads. Just because congressmen were on the first floor looking straight into the demonstration, while the Supreme Executive Council looked down upon it from upstairs, did not make Congress the object of the confrontation. Three o'clock arrived and the congressmen passed through the sentries and into the mass of drinking demonstrators and citizens. Other than shouts and curses, only one incident occurred. A citizen pointed out Boudinot as the President of Congress and yelled that he should not be allowed to escape. Private Andrew Wright and a small group of soldiers accosted Boudinot and ordered him back to the State House. Sergeant Solomon Townsend, however, came up, apologized to Boudinot, and lectured the men on the respect due their superiors. St. Clair soon thereafter informed the soldiers of the Council's willingness to meet with a negotiating committee. While there were some cheers at the announcement, on the whole the soldiers milled about unable to agree who should present their case. Finally, the sergeants directed the men back to the barracks in order to decide there. The demonstration was over, and the Council adjourned just after four P.M. Robert Morris, who had fled to the country home of a business associate, returned to Philadelphia, allegedly regretting his flight as an overreaction.[30]

Immediately upon reaching his home, Boudinot sent an express to General Washington at Newburgh requesting him to advance a body of dependable troops on Philadelphia. Boudinot informed Washington that he was not writing with the authority of Congress

30 "Notes on Debates," June 21, 1783, *Madison Papers*, VII, 177; Townsend Deposition, folio [50]; Boudinot Account, [2]; Dickinson Account, 656; La Luzerne to Vergennes, June 21, 1783, Correspondence Politique; Jonathan Buyers to William Irvine, July 1, 1783, Irvine Papers, HSP; William Clayton to Horatio Gates, June 23, 1783, Miscellaneous Manuscripts, New York Public Library; Morris Diary, June 21, 1783; "The Reminiscences of David Hayfield Conyngham, 1750–1834 . . .," *Proceedings and Collections of the Wyoming Historical and Genealogical Society*, VIII (1904), 221.

but at the request of the members present. Boudinot also summoned congressmen back to the State House for another special session at six P.M. This time a quorum formed and secret resolutions were placed on the Journals: Washington was ordered to march troops on Philadelphia; the Hamilton Committee was instructed to seek effectual measures in support of public authority from the Pennsylvania Council; and, if the Council did not respond promptly or adequately, Congress agreed to remove either to Princeton or Trenton by the end of the week.[31] With the mouth of the Hudson still in British hands and with Delaware so intimately linked to Pennsylvania, Congress had to choose between Maryland and Boudinot's home state of New Jersey. Maryland lost out, apparently because of a lack of votes to pull Congress southward, because only one Maryland delegate was attending, and because soldiers of the Maryland Line had participated in the mutinous June 13 memorial to Congress. Congress delegated to the Hamilton Committee full authority to recommend a removal if it saw fit.

All seven states attending concurred in the resolves. Pennsylvania, which could have prevented the adoption of the removal resolution, agreed because its centralist delegation favored supporting the claims of the federal government and because it was clearly understood that the removal was to be *temporary*, only until order was restored. Boudinot sent the resolves off to Washington Sunday morning, concluding that "this wound to the dignity of the Federal Government should not go unpunished."[32] The authority and dignity of the government, in the form of a confrontation with the State of Pennsylvania, had replaced the settlement of accounts as the central issue of the mutiny in all but the soldiers' minds.

While Congress adopted its secret resolutions on the evening of June 21, between twenty and thirty of the mutinous soldiers met at the Sign of the Three Tuns Tavern on Race Street. Carbery and Sullivan assured the men that they would have their pay in a day or two if they remained sober and created no further disturbances.

31 Boudinot to Washington, 4 P.M., 11 P.M., June 21, 1783, *LMCC*, VII, 194; Boudinot Account, [3]; "Notes on Debates," June 21, 1783, *Madison Papers*, VII, 177; Ford, *Journals*, XXIV, 410; James McHenry to Thomas S. Lee, June 28 [26?], 1783, McHenry Papers, DLC.

32 Peters to Thomas FitzSimons, July 26, 1783, Boudinot to Washington, 11 P.M., June 21, 1783, Peters, Undelivered Motion, [26–30 July], 1783, *LMCC*, VII, 194, 234, 329–330.

The meeting selected Captains Henry Carbery, Jonas Symonds, John Steele, James Christie, and Lieutenants John Sullivan and William Houston to represent them in the negotiations with Pennsylvania. Elsewhere in Philadelphia that Saturday night, Robert Morris called on Dickinson at his home and advised him once again to call up the militia.[33]

Rumors of violence were widespread on Sunday and Monday as the Hamilton Committee and the Pennsylvania Executive Council met to discuss the situation. The Committee informed Pennsylvania that Congress expected the state to call up the militia, but Pennsylvania refused on grounds that the citizens of Philadelphia remained convinced of the peaceful intent of the soldiers, of the justice of their demands, and of a happy outcome to the negotiation arranged by St. Clair and consented to by Pennsylvania and the congressmen at the State House during the Saturday demonstration. The Hamilton Committee requested the response in writing but Pennsylvania refused; it would correspond only with Congress, not with one of its committees. Although Congress had put the heaviest pressure it could on Pennsylvania—a threat to remove the federal capital and all it represented in prestige and money for the local economy—the State not only refused to buckle under to the federal government's demand for a militia call but also used the opportunity to confirm its supremacy over a congressional committee. It was an ironical role for Dickinson and Pennsylvania whose commitments to strong central government were well known.[34]

Hamilton barely controlled his rage—a rage fed by congressional impotence—at the state's "weak and disgusting position." He considered its refusal to transact business with his committee in writing further evidence of Pennsylvania's disrespect for the federal government, and made that incident a central issue in the federal-state confrontation.[35]

33 Deposition of Sgt. Joseph Morgan, July 1, 1783, Bennett Deposition, July 1, 1783, Townsend Deposition, July 2, 1783, RG 360, Item 38, folios 51, 54–[55], 67–69; Morris Diary, June 21, 1783.

34 Benjamin Rush to John Montgomery, July 2, 1783, *LMCC*, VII, 201n; Chaloner and White to ————, June 22, 1783, Chaloner and White Letter Book; Council Minutes, June 22, 1783, XIII, 606, 608–609; Dickinson Account, 656–661; Hamilton Account, 440–445; Ford, *Journals*, XXIV, 416–418.

35 Hamilton to Gov. George Clinton, June 29, 1783, *Hamilton Papers*, III, 408.

On Tuesday Robert Morris' office was abuzz. Hamilton and the Pennsylvania delegation advised the Superintendent that Congress would likely leave that afternoon. Secretary of Congress Charles Thomson called on Morris to make arrangements for the removal. In the meantime, the Council met with the militia's field officers to seek their advice about a mobilization, explaining that Congress would likely leave Philadelphia if there were no call. The field officers recommended against a call unless the proposed negotiation failed, the demands of the soldiers became unreasonable, or if an outrage were committed. The Council accepted the advice, but nevertheless urged them to have their companies in readiness.[36]

Prior to adjourning for the day, Council received a letter from Captain Christie, president of the soldiers' negotiating committee, informing it that his committee had reached an honorable arrangement with the sergeants for representing their interests. The sergeants would present their proposals via the negotiating committee the next day. After Council adjourned, Dickinson read a note from Boudinot informing him that Congress had left for New Jersey.[37]

Why had the reluctant Hamilton, who later claimed to have been willing to delay removal until the last minute if necessary to secure a militia call, changed his mind? He was of course under great pressure from members of Congress, chief among whom was his friend Boudinot. When General St. Clair informed Hamilton that he thought the soldiers' proposals were actually new demands, and when Dickinson had yet to inform him of the results of the Council's meeting with the militia field officers, Hamilton gave in. He and Ellsworth signed a letter recommending removal to New Jersey, but Ellsworth's name was scratched out apparently after Peters refused to sign. Hamilton, however, asserted later that he, Ellsworth, and St. Clair understood Peters to believe that the committee had no alternative. Hamilton, who always implied that Congress was in session on the afternoon of June 21, drafted a proclamation which Boudinot signed after rewriting some phrases, including words that implied Congress had adopted its Saturday resolutions during the

36 Morris Diary, June 24, 1783; Council Minutes, June 24, 1783, XIII, 609–610; Dickinson Account, 661–663.

37 Council Minutes, June 24, 1783, XIII, 610; Dickinson Account, 663; Dickinson Notations, *Pennsylvania Archives*, Series 1, X, 60.

demonstration. The proclamation gave the impression that Congress was meeting during the demonstration. Boudinot informed federal officials (Hamilton got to Robert Morris with the news first) and the congressmen about the proclamation, requesting that it be kept secret until Congress was safely out of town.[38]

West of Fort Pitt, out in that vast wilderness to which the United States in Congress Assembled had all but secured title from Britain if not from the states, the summer sun was still shining on a rising empire. Yet, that Congress, its faithful Secretary, and its Secretary of Finance, as a result of a unanimous vote of the states present, were on the road for Princeton. What had motivated a politically divided Congress to adjourn to New Jersey in the wake of a nonviolent demonstration which was not even aimed at it? Three reasons stand out. First, was the fear of a few delegates that the mutiny of the Lancaster and Philadelphia soldiers was not an isolated event. Congress was beginning to hear about mutinies throughout the states. Was there a grand design behind it all? Had the flame suppressed at Newburgh been rekindled, two delegates pointedly wondered? Was the Revolution to be subverted, as had been so often the case in history, "by the swords of a mutinous or victorious Army?"[39] Second, the federal government desperately needed more political power and public support. The mutiny provided a final, unexpected opportunity to assert the claims of that government and to rally public opinion to its support. Centralists knew they took a great risk in removing from Philadelphia because some people, particularly in Europe where public credit was at stake, might interpret the removal as an act of weakness instead of strength.[40] But its temporary nature and the triumphal return of Congress to its capital when order was restored made the risk worth taking. Some centralists such as Madison, and moderates such as the two North Carolina delegates, questioned the need for the removal, but they saw the necessity of asserting Congress' right to

[38] Hamilton Account, 447–448; Dickinson Account, 662; Hamilton to Boudinot, June 24, 1783, Hamilton's draft of the proclamation, June 24, 1783, Boudinot Papers, DLC; Madison to Hamilton, Oct. 16, 1783, *Madison Papers*, VII, 383.

[39] North Carolina Delegates to Gov. Alexander Martin, Aug. 1, 1783, *LMCC*, VII, 246–247.

[40] On the prestige and power of Congress in 1783, see Hamilton, "Defense of Congress," [July 1783], *Hamilton Papers*, III, 426–430. On Hamilton's awareness of the dangers of a removal see his letter to Madison, June 29, 1783, *ibid.*, III, 409, and Hamilton Account, 447.

protection where it resided. As the North Carolina delegates expressed it to their governor, "the respect which we owe to the Sovereign State we have the honor to represent, required that we should leave a city in which protection was expressly refused us, even though there had not been other motives more closely connected with the public safety."[41] The third reason deserves special attention. "The prevailing idea" in Philadelphia, Hamilton noted on a visit back to the city, "is that the actors in the removal of Congress were influenced by the desire of getting them out of the city. . . ."[42]

Except for two periods when the British Army drove Congress out of Philadelphia, that city had been the American capital since 1774, but for a variety of reasons congressmen had long been unhappy about it. Philadelphia was an expensive place to live. The pressures of a large commercial city, including mob action, repeatedly interfered with Congress' independence, and, some feared, even threatened the existence of a Republic. Further, because of its proximity to Congress, the government of Pennsylvania had exercised more influence over the affairs of the Union than had other states. Congress similarly had an unnatural effect on Pennsylvania politics. Several conflicts between the two governments (Gouverneur Morris had been the central figure in the most heated) had occurred. In response to offers of capital sites from New York and Maryland, Congress had agreed early in June 1783 to select a post-war capital in October.[43]

Although some centralists had indicated their desire to leave Philadelphia prior to the June mutiny, decentralists such as Stephen Higginson and Samuel Holten of Massachusetts, Jonathan Arnold of Rhode Island, Arthur Lee and Theodorick Bland of Virginia, and Ralph Izard of South Carolina were particularly anxious to leave.[44]

41 North Carolina Delegates to Gov. Alexander Martin, Aug. 1, 1783, *LMCC*, VII, 248. See also Eleazer McComb to President Nicholas Van Dyke of Delaware, June 30, 1783, *ibid.*, 206–207.

42 To Madison, July 6, 1783, *Hamilton Papers*, III, 412.

43 On Congress' troubled residence at Philadelphia from 1774 to 1783, see Brunhouse, *Counter-Revolution*, Chapters 2–4; and my forthcoming book on the location of the United States Capital.

44 Nathaniel Gorham to Caleb Davis, June 4, 1783, Caleb Davis Papers, Massachusetts Historical Society; Ellsworth to Gov. Jonathan Trumbull, June 4, 1783, *LMCC*, VII, 180. Although the decentralists did not oppose all efforts to strengthen the central government, they were vigilant in their belief that the federal government should be the creature of supreme states.

They had come to see Congress' residence at Philadelphia as the symbol of all that was evil in the post-1780 centralist vision of a strong federal government. Lee complained in 1782 that "the residence of Congress in the bosom of *Toryism* . . . is as impolitic as it is unjust," and he had repeated in 1783 that "Congress have set too long in a City where every man affects the Politician. . . . They must move to some Spot where they will have a better chance to act independently."[45] These men welcomed the opportunity to escape from Philadelphia and "Morrisonian slavery." They had attempted without success to remove Congress from Philadelphia when Dickinson first informed Congress that soldiers from Lancaster were on the road for the city.[46]

In addition to the reasons for leaving which pushed from Philadelphia, there was also a pull. Certain Middle States delegates, well aware of the financial and other benefits of the residence of Congress, saw in the mutiny an opportunity to get Congress into their own state and this influenced their conduct, though probably not to the extent that the Pennsylvanians believed. Maryland's sole delegate, James McHenry, was convinced that if his state's troops had not joined in the mutinous June 13 memorial to Congress, he could have effected his "favorite scheme"—making Annapolis the American Hague.[47]

President Boudinot more than any other seized the opportunity. "I wish Jersey to show her readiness on this occasion as it may fix Congress as to their permanent residence," he prompted his brother at home. From the Governor of New Jersey he sought assurance that the citizens and the state would show Congress more respect than Pennsylvania and its citizens had: "the Honor and dignity of the United States are at stake." Boudinot also reminded the Governor, who already had "good reason" to think that Congress would prefer New Jersey to either Maryland or New York for its permanent capital, that even a temporary removal would benefit their state. Boudinot told the Governor that if Congress came to New Jersey it would go to Princeton, not Trenton. Boudinot chose

45 To Francis Dana [?], July 6, 1782, to ————, May 1783, *LMCC*, VI, 379, VII, 156.

46 John Scott to Arthur Lee, Aug. 20, 1783, Lee Papers, quoted by permission of the Houghton Library, Harvard University; "Notes on Debates," June 19, 1783, *Madison Papers*, VII, 165.

47 To Thomas S. Lee, June 28 [26?], 1783, McHenry Papers.

Princeton—a decision made before the Hamilton Committee recommended removal—because he knew the town well. He had lived there from boyhood through college and had married into its most prominent family. The fact that Trenton, like Philadelphia, was the residence of a state government may have influenced him also. Madison, who like Ellsworth and other delegates knew the village from college days, noted later that Princeton was chosen over Trenton because it was the least unfit of the two towns.[48]

Nevertheless, it was Hamilton more than Boudinot who was accused by the Pennsylvanians and others of using the mutiny to take Congress ultimately to his own state. "I am told," he informed Madison less than a week after Congress left Philadelphia, "that this insinuation has been pointed at me in particular." He sought testimony from Madison so that his friends could vindicate him. In particular he asked Madison to confirm that he had in fact urged delay in leaving Philadelphia.[49] Madison confirmed, as did Boudinot and Dickinson, that Hamilton had opposed removal except as a last resort,[50] but Madison also gave a centralist ally in Virginia reason to comment "that two of the members of the Committee were disposed to advise the President to the Measure which his inclination encouraged them to adopt I have no doubt. . . . Mr. H———'s excuse for concurring in the measure is by no means satisfactory."[51]

It is impossible to determine how much Hamilton, who was the central figure in the removal, acted from such a motive. He clearly supported the effort of New York to obtain the capital and lamented to its Governor after the removal that New York's offers of space at Kingston had not been more liberal. "It is probable if they had been, the scales would incline in our favour. . . . I need not urge the advantages that will accrue to a state from being the residence of

48 Elias to Elisha Boudinot, June 23, 1783, *LMCC*, VII, 195; Boudinot to Gov. William Livingston, June 23, 1783, Boudinot Papers; Livingston to the Assembly, June 12, 1783, *Henkels Catalog No. 860* (1901), item 548; George Boyd, *Elias Boudinot* (Princeton, 1952), Ch. 1; "Notes on Congress' Place of Residence," [*c.* Oct. 14, 1783], *Madison Papers*, VII, 379.

49 June 29, July 6, 1783, *Hamilton Papers*, III, 408–409, 412.

50 Madison to Hamilton, Oct. 16, 1783, *Madison Papers*, VII, 382–383; Boudinot to Rush, July 25, 1783, Boudinot Papers; Dickinson Account, 662.

51 Joseph Jones to Madison, July 14, 1783, *Madison Papers*, VII, 222–224n1.

Congress."[52] On the other hand, Hamilton never implicated himself. Whatever effect the desire of New Yorkers to obtain the capital had on Hamilton's conduct during the mutiny, he never escaped the insinuation. An allegory published in Philadelphia asserted that the ship *Congress* after escaping all sorts of dangers during the Revolution, including "Lee shores," had sunk, and that some members "were privy to the sinking" desiring that she should be "moored hereafter, at a new warf lately built on the North [Hudson] River." Even the grave did not spare Hamilton and his friend Boudinot from the allegations.[53]

After Congress left Philadelphia, the mutiny quickly subsided. Boudinot's proclamation was posted throughout the city Tuesday night only to be torn down by soldiers and disgusted citizens. Expectations of violence were still adrift Wednesday morning when Council and an exhausted Dickinson (he had stayed awake all night because of a rumored attack on the Bank which never materialized) called out 100 militia to secure the government from insult and the State and City from injury.[54]

As word spread among the citizens that Congress had "decampt in the night," Captains Christie and Symonds of the soldiers' negotiating committee arrived at the State House. They brought a written apology from the sergeants for their behavior in front of the State House as well as a denial and condemnation of any such desperate acts as an attack on the Bank. The two officers also had the soldiers' proposals with them. All but the last, which requested a pardon, concerned settlement of the Line's accounts. The soldiers apologized separately for their behavior on Saturday but claimed in their own defense that they had been inflamed by the three federal officials who had visited them at the barracks the night before. In particular they pointed to one whom they did not name: "Had not that particular Gentleman . . . spoke as he did, the troops

52 Hamilton to Clinton, June 29, 1783, *Hamilton Papers*, III, 408.

53 (Philadelphia) *Independent Gazetteer*, Aug. 9, 1783. A writer in the *American Register* asserted in 1809 (V, 379) that the removal had been contrived by Boudinot and Hamilton to get Congress first to New Jersey and, later, to New York City.

54 (Philadelphia) *Pennsylvania Gazette*, June 28, 1783; Rush to Montgomery, June 27, 1783, Lyman H. Butterfield, ed., *The Letters of Benjamin Rush* (Princeton, 1951), I, 302; Dickinson Notations, *Pennsylvania Archives*, Series 1, X, 60; Council Minutes, June 25, 1783, XIII, 611.

would not [have] assembled." The soldiers requested that they receive one half of all the pay due to them before accepting furlough; that the rest be paid in interest bearing certificates—but not the worthless kind they had received previously; and that arrangements be made to settle their accounts—the clothing, rations, land patents, and other special gratuities promised when they had enlisted.[55]

Council refused to consider the proposals until the soldiers made a full and satisfactory submission to Congress. Christie and Symonds agreed to so inform the soldiers but warned the Council that the soldiers might respond violently because they "did not think they had offended Congress, as their intention on Saturday was only to apply to Council." When the two Captains left, Council raised its militia call to 500 men. On his return to the barracks, Christie opened a cryptic note from Carbery and Sullivan to one of the sergeants. Christie and Symonds took it to Colonel Humpton, who along with the sergeants, went to Dickinson. Convinced that the note meant that the two ringleaders had fled, the sergeants considered themselves betrayed. Humpton proposed, and Dickinson agreed, that the officers and sergeants should return to the barracks to convince the soldiers to submit, and in this they were successful.[56]

Benjamin Rush was one of several citizens involved in these negotiations. He believed that he was the key figure in convincing the soldiers to submit. Since the soldiers were worried that should they do so unconditionally they would be punished, Rush went to Dickinson who promised to plead their case to Congress if they laid down their arms. The soldiers were at first dubious, but agreed to go as a group to Dickinson's home near the State House if Rush would come along as security. Very sympathetic to the sufferings of the soldiers and a lover of the limelight, Rush agreed immediately. With the exception of the Lancaster troops, the soldiers—with Rush placed among the leaders at the front—marched to Dickinson's in the evening. Dickinson came out, stood on a table, and addressed

55 Christopher Marshall Diary, June 25, 1783, HSP; Council Minutes, June 25, 1783, XIII, 612; Dickinson Account, 664; Bennett to Council, June 25, 1783, Address of the Mutineers, June 25, 1783, RG 360, Item 38, folios 29–[30], 33–[38].

56 Asserting that they had been the sole instigators of the mutiny, the two men went to London. Both later returned to the United States.

them by candlelight. He lectured on their "unprecedented and heinous fault," promised to recommend their pardon to Congress, and demanded as proof of their reformed disposition that they join the militia to reduce the Lancaster troops should they not leave Philadelphia within twenty-four hours.[57] Dickinson then informed Boudinot that the mutiny was over.

On Thursday, just as Boudinot received Dickinson's letter, most of the Lancaster troops submitted at morning roll call. By nightfall all were on the road home. Dickinson informed Boudinot on Thursday night and again on Friday morning that the situation in Philadelphia had returned to normal. There had been no property damage or injury to life during the entire two-week mutiny. Because of the temporary nature of the removal, Dickinson and other Philadelphians expected Congress to return immediately.[58] Few dreamt Congress would wait more than seven years.

Washington did not adopt Boudinot's suggestion that he personally lead the troops from Army Headquarters to Philadelphia. Instead, Washington dispatched General Robert Howe and 1,500 men of the Massachusetts Line. Even though it knew the mutiny was over, Congress, on July 1, ordered Howe to march to Philadelphia. It also adopted Hamilton's motion for Howe to bring to trial all army personnel involved in the mutiny and to examine fully all circumstances related to it. Howe was cautioned to consult with the Pennsylvania Council on all matters touching civil authority.[59] The General remained in Philadelphia for several weeks and probably did more than anyone to ease tensions. He took depositions from participants and witnesses, and by the end of July several men were court-martialed. The court-martial acquitted Captain Christie, Captain Symonds, and Lieutenant Houston. John Steele, the fourth member of the soldiers negotiating committee was not court-martialed. The other two members of the committee, Sullivan and

[57] Council Minutes, June 25, 1783, XIII, 611–612; Dickinson Account, 664–665; draft of Dickinson Account, Dickinson Papers, HSP; Humpton Account, folios [8]–9; Dickinson Notations, Pennsylvania Archives, Series 1, X, 60; Rush to [John Adams], April 1812, Rush Papers, Library Company of Philadelphia, HSP.

[58] Dickinson to Boudinot, June 25, 26, 27, 1783, RG 360, Item 38, folios 127, 135, 143, National Archives.

[59] Boudinot to Washington, June 26, July 1, 1783, *LMCC*, VII, 200, 208; Ford, *Journals*, XXIV, 411-413.

Carbery, had fled. Sentenced to whippings were gunner Lilly, drummer Horn, and privates Thomas Flowers and William Carman. Sentenced to death by hanging were the two sergeants who had led the demonstration, John Morrison and Christian Nagle. Pennsylvania requested pardons for all the men, and Nagle and Morrison petitioned Congress for pardon. Mary Morris and Mary Dickinson signed both petitions thus indicating their husbands' positions. While Congress pardoned all parties sentenced, it struck from the resolution praise to the army for submitting so long to innumerable wants and hardships and the statement that the troops involved in the mutiny had submitted quickly. Congress also voted special thanks to Howe for his conduct during "the delicate investigation of so atrocious an offense." By then Paymaster General John Pierce had begun the settlement of accounts authorized by Congress early in July, a task he had not completed when he died five years later. And in October, Congress discharged the army it had furloughed in May.[60]

Many observers of the mutiny were convinced that civilians with deep designs were behind the affair, and that Carbery and Sullivan were mere pawns in a grand design. James Mercer punned to his brother at Congress to "sift every thing to the bottom as it [Congress] will discover some Capital movers in this nefarious business." Madison was convinced that the "real plan and object" lay in "profound darkness," and Hamilton and Boudinot believed that much more than the settlement of accounts had been at stake. General Howe informed Boudinot at the end of his investigation that "the ultimate ends . . . of this horrid transaction were of greater magnitude and of deeper design than as yet can be made to appear." Nevertheless, there is no evidence to support such contentions and they appear as unfounded as all of the other rumors which circulated in Philadelphia during the mutiny.[61]

[60] Ford, *Journals*, XXIV, 426–427, 509–510, 514, XXV, 564–567, 703; RG 360, Item 38, folios 151, 185–187, 189; Boudinot to Howe, Sept. 13, 1783, *LMCC*, VII, 297; *Pierce's Register*, introduction.

[61] James to John Mercer, July 15, 1783, Mercer Papers, Virginia Historical Society; Madison to Thomas Jefferson, Sept. 20, 1783, *Madison Papers*, VII, 354; Hamilton Account, 457; Boudinot to Rush, July 25, 1783, Boudinot Papers; Howe to Boudinot, Sept. 2, 1783, RG 360, Item 38, folio 119.

The summer of 1783 was filled with charges and countercharges between the partisans of Pennsylvania and those of Congress over the necessity of the move to Princeton and the degree of blame due Congress or Pennsylvania. At the official level, Hamilton and Ellsworth prepared a report describing their committee's dealings with Pennsylvania in the wake of the demonstration. Ellsworth believed it would "exhibit the President, and Council of Pennsylvania to the World, in such colours as will not be very pleasing to the brave, and virtuous part of the community."[62]

Peters, who refused to join Hamilton and Ellsworth in the report because he objected to its contents, was disgusted by Congress' refusal to return to Philadelphia: "It seems to be the Plan of some to while away the Time here 'till it is too late to remove anywhere before the Period fixed for a final Resolution for our permanent Residence. . . . Our City is scarcely mentioned [among possible sites] lest if we should get there we should never get out." He thought of putting something on the Journal of Congress to counteract the Hamilton-Ellsworth report, and as July wore into August he drafted a resolution to effect a return to Philadelphia.[63] Its seven lengthy whereas clauses were in effect the minority report of the Hamilton Committee. Peters argued that Congress should go back to Philadelphia because Pennsylvania had consented to the removal on June 21 on the sole ground that it was to be temporary; because the decision by Dickinson and the Council to negotiate with the soldiers appeared to the public to have resolved the mutiny without bloodshed; and because a continued refusal to return might necessitate an investigation into the mutiny by Pennsylvania. Such an investigation, if its conclusions differed from the investigation already initiated by Congress, Peters threatened, might obstruct federal plans and occasion a dangerous breach between Congress and a state which had constantly shown its disposition to support the federal government. Most importantly, Peters observed that a return to Philadelphia (since it would necessitate the votes of members whose known object was to locate the permanent capital somewhere other than Philadelphia) would avoid the appearance

62 Ford, *Journals*, XXIV, 416–421 (Hamilton's report on the events preceding the demonstration is on pages 413–416); Ellsworth to Reed, July 1, 1783, *LMCC*, VII, 209–210.

63 To Thomas FitzSimons, July 26, 1783, *LMCC*, VII, 233–234.

that "the Supreme Government of the United States," had left Philadelphia "for private or partial Motives." Peters never submitted his motion, and on August 14, despite assurances from Dickinson and the Council that its return was sincerely desired, Congress easily defeated a motion to return to Philadelphia.[64] Thus, the temporary removal became permanent.

Pennsylvania never conducted an investigation of the mutiny. However, Dickinson believed the report which Hamilton and Ellsworth had placed on the Journals of Congress was a gross distortion, and he delivered his interpretation of the mutiny to the Pennsylvania Assembly in August. The Assembly, still hoping to woo Congress back, did not, as was customary, order the message printed. Dickinson consequently had it published anonymously in the press. The message was self-justifying of course, but it raised fundamental questions about Congress' motives in removing. It argued that Congress reacted improperly to a matter which was between Pennsylvania and its Line; and that the Council and General St. Clair, with the approval of the congressmen at the State House during the demonstration, acted to calm a potentially inflammatory situation by agreeing to a negotiated settlement. Dickinson seldom mentioned Hamilton by name in his message but it was clear whom he blamed for Congress' behavior.[65] The French Minister believed the message left the impression with the public that the removal of Congress was not due to Dickinson but instead to Hamilton who had "soured the climate by spreading rumors" during the mutiny in hopes that Congress "would reside in his State."[66]

Hamilton was pained when he read the message in the newspaper. In response he penned, but apparently never sent, a more than 5,000 word letter to Dickinson defending himself and asserting the

64 Undelivered motion to Return to Philadelphia, [July 26–30], 1783, *LMCC*, VII, 329–330. Burnett published the document under the date of [Oct. 10?, 1783], on the assumption that it was related to the debate on the permanent and temporary residence of Congress. Internal evidence indicates that it was written soon after an address from the citizens of Philadelphia reached Congress on July 24, perhaps even prior to Congress' response to it on July 28. Peters left Congress on August 14 after it voted not to return to its former capital.

65 Dickinson Account, 654–666; James to James Madison, Sr., Aug. 30, 1783, *Madison Papers*, VII, 294; Frederick Muhlenberg to Peters, Aug. 30, 1783, Peters Papers, HSP.

66 To Vergennes, Nov. 1, 1783, Correspondence Politique, XXVI.

supremacy of the United States government in the matter. Hamilton completely rejected Dickinson's contention that the dignity of Congress was "only *accidently* and *undesignedly* offended." It was immaterial whether the soldiers had memorialized Pennsylvania or Congress, the insult to the latter was the same. Indeed, the insult was not so much to Congress as it was to government and public authority in general. Nor was there any weight to Dickinson's contention that there was no danger. It was a "deliberate mutiny of an incensed soldiery carried to the utmost point of outrage short of assassination . . . an armed banditti of four or five hundred men" who might in "a fit of intoxication . . . make the city a scene of plunder and massacre." These soldiers "were reduced by coertion [on the part of Congress] not overcome by mildness [on the part of Pennsylvania]" as Dickinson had insisted.

"The Multitude," Hamilton knew, would likely "conclude that the affair was of triffling consequence," that Congress "discovered a prudish nicety and irritability about their own dignity" while Council "were more temperate, more humane and possessed of greater foresight." The bias in favor of an injured army, "the propensity of the human mind to lean to the speciousness of professed humanity rather than to the harshness of authority," the imperfect notions of what is due to public authority in an infant popular government, and "the insinuating plausibility of a well constructed *message*," will all act, he complained to Dickinson, to support the multitude in its conclusion.[67]

For Hamilton a "chain of ideas" naturally connected the removal of Congress from Philadelphia with its weakness and want of public support. "New governments emerging out of a revolution, are naturally deficient in authority," wrote Hamilton in a piece intended for the Philadelphia press in July. "This observation applies with peculiar force to the government of the union; the constitutional imbecility of which must be apparent to every man of reflection." The fault lay in the Constitution, not in its administration, and when Congress made attempts to strengthen itself it was "branded with the imputations of a spirit of encroachment and a lust of power." "To be happy," the states "must have a stronger

[67] Hamilton Account, 438–460.

bond of Union and a Confederation capable of drawing forth the resources of the Country."[68]

Dickinson and Hamilton sought to establish their own veracity in their analyses of Congress' response to the mutiny. Each man wrote not only for immediate vindication but also for history. Both versions are necessary to understand what happened and why. Hamilton believed that the necessity of asserting the dignity and supremacy of the federal government justified the means Congress employed. Dickinson believed otherwise, but his defense of Pennsylvania in the confrontation with the federal government did not diminish his commitment to the same end as Hamilton. Along with his message on the mutiny, he also submitted one which urged Pennsylvania to institute new efforts to strengthen the federal government. Despite agreement on the necessity of supporting the dignity and powers of Congress, the two adversaries disagreed about the means Congress employed during and after the mutiny to assert it. Historians have always settled the dispute in favor of Hamilton and the federal government.

The constitutional crisis which faced the United States in the spring of 1783 ended when Congress left Philadelphia. It was resolved in favor of continued state supremacy within the federal government and of executive dependence on Congress. For centralist allies Hamilton and Dickinson, among many others, this meant five more years of struggle. No upsurge of public support for Congress grew out of the mutiny, and in the process centralists lost the stability and concentration of political and financial power which had supported them at Philadelphia. Instead, Congress wandered about the Middle States for eighteen months until it settled, as the Philadelphians had predicted in the wake of the mutiny, at New York City. The only benefit to the centralists from the mutiny was the great push it gave the novel American concept that a central government should have exclusive jurisdiction over the place at which it resided. But even that would take years to accomplish. When it was proposed on the floor of Congress in September 1783, the decentralists, whose rapidly ascending influence in Congress was evident in the refusal to return to Philadelphia, easily turned the

68 Defense of Congress, [July 1783], *Hamilton Papers*, III, 426–430.

idea aside.[69] "You will readily conceive that a recollection of the events which have taken place these six months past give me the most pungent pain," the Philadelphia centralist, Secretary of Congress Charles Thomson, complained to the momentarily retired Richard Peters in January 1784. "Oh that it could be obliterated from the annals of America and utterly effaced from my memory!"[70]

When John Dickinson died in February 1808, Congress had just turned back the efforts of a New Jersey congressman to abandon the District of Columbia in order to return to Philadelphia. Members of both houses unanimously agreed to wear black crepe on their left arms as a testimony of *national* gratitude.[71] The United States government at the time of Dickinson's death bore little resemblance to the government which had asserted in 1783 that it had been surrounded by armed soldiers and unprotected by Dickinson and Pennsylvania. In 1783 a federal government, still in its infancy and seeking a larger share of the political power in America for itself, had considered itself doubly insulted. It chose to interpret the insults in such a way as to appeal for the public support it desperately needed, basing that appeal on the popular concept of civilian control of the military and on the dignity owed Congress by the government of the state in which it resided. The real insult to the United States in June 1783 was devastating in its implications: Continental soldiers under the command and control of Congress ignored the federal government and sought instead to settle their accounts with the State of Pennsylvania. This fact, and not the assertion that Congress left because it had been surrounded by soldiers and unprotected by Pennsylvania, is the reason why the mutiny and subsequent removal of Congress is an appropriate symbol of the lack of power and prestige of the federal government in 1783.

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69 See *LMCC*, VII, 302n, and my forthcoming book on the location of the United States Capital for information on the debate over the jurisdiction of Congress.

70 Jan. 19, 1784, *LMCC*, VII, 421.

71 Joseph Gales and W. W. Seaton, comps., *Annals of Congress* (Washington, 1834–56), XVII, 234, XVIII, 1532–1579, 1648.