# Comte de Moustier to Comte de Montmorin New York, 2 August 1788

The State of Newyork on the 25th of last month finally acceded to the new Constitution, which is now adopted by eleven States. The recommended amendments[1] are so numerous and so important that if the new Congress takes them into account, this Constitution will barely resemble its first form. However, a great blow has been dealt to the individual Sovereignty of the States taken separately. The phantom of Democracy that has seduced the people is about to disappear. The credulous majority, intoxicated by the noblest hopes that it allowed itself to be fed, has itself forged the bonds by which sooner or later the Leaders of the people will be able to subjugate and control them after having appeared to want to obey them. The Constitution is taken on approval until a better one is found. This tendency always to perfect is infinitely favorable to the designs of the ambitious, who, by means of alterations, will manage to weary the American people and make them receive with indifference the yoke that is prepared for them and that they will probably endure much more patiently than expected. The proposed amendments offer a multitude of pretexts at the outset even for a reorganization of Government. This means is open to various parties. It is not doubted that each will profit from it according to its views.

The new Constitution appeared to be a remedy for all the ills from which the United States is suffering. The joy of the majority is especially expressed by public rejoicings. Different cities had processions in which all the classes of Citizens were represented. The city of Newyork did not even wait for the State Convention to give its decision. It had its procession at a time when it was strongly doubted that the State would adopt the Constitution. What was special about this popular festival is that Congress in a way risked sanctioning its purpose, which was to show the particular opinion of the city in opposition to what was assumed to be the opinion of the State, by attending all together and consequently as a Sovereign, a rather mediocre dinner given by the professions and trades of the city. I had been invited, and I attended this dinner, seated to the right of Congress and was followed in succession by the Minister Plenipotentiary of the States-General, the Chargé d'affaires Plenipotentiary of Spain, the Consuls and other foreigners of distinction. To the left of Congress were its Officers and the members of the Clergy from the City, Anglicans, Presbyterians, Catholics, Lutherans, Calvinists, Jews, all indiscriminately seated, except that the Anglican Bishop had taken the right from all the others and had said the *blessing*. Congress, itself realizing that it was out of place in this festival as an official body, then wanted to maintain that it had not been there as Congress, but I insisted, in part jokingly, in part seriously with different Members, that it had been everyone's opinion that they were, that were it not for

that, they would have had to have been scattered among the guests and that I would have had to have been to the right of the President. Beyond this, this entire ceremony can be regarded as without significance; even though people try to lend significance to it everywhere, it still signified nothing; but it is a malady brought to this country from the Mother-country, where pretensions of this type take shape on every occasion. It is to be hoped that this unpleasantness will gradually disappear.[2]

One of the purposes of the festival of the Citizens of Newyork was to cajole Congress and urge it to adjourn the new Sovereign body here. For its part, Congress appeared to want to postpone its decision on this matter until the time when the [New York] Convention would have adopted the Constitution. Some of its Members did not neglect to hint that this uncertainty was the only obstacle preventing Congress from adjourning the new one here. This bait had its effect. The Federalists of the Convention even went so far as to assert that there would be no difficulty as soon as the State of Newyork entered into the new union. Now, since the pretense is no longer necessary, the Pennsylvanians are doing everything they can in order to obtain a preference in favor of Philadelphia. The entire week has been spent in debate on this subject, in which it seemed that personal interest has a much greater part than the public interest.

The question of determining a suitable time and place to which to adjourn has aroused the attention of all the States and consequently Delegates from each one are found here; they will probably disperse as soon as these two questions are decided. The Delegates from Rhode-island content themselves with attending the deliberations without giving an opinion on any question that could be regarded as foreign to their State, since it has rejected the new Constitution.

As soon as the decision of North Carolina is known, I will have the honor to send You in the same packet, My Lord, the Constitution as it has been proposed by the general Convention, with the comparison of the different amendments proposed by the individual Conventions. I will separate this statement from the observations that I propose to have the honor of submitting to You on the influence of the Constitution on the foreign policy of the United States and on the probabilities of the system that can prevail in this respect.

There was an example here of what is to be expected from the dominant party during changes of Government, in spite of the beautiful name of liberty, which so rarely finds itself corresponding to the facts. An unfortunate Printer, who was the last to set about to print a gazette in a city in which there are too many of them, in order to make his paper fashionable had conceived of collecting small bits of gossip that were in opposition to the Federalist party. A tasteless joke about a mishap that occurred in the federal procession, which has been punished by the destruction of his printing establishment and personal insults, obliged him to flee from his house and to abandon it to the champions of liberty, who often make a bad use of it against the weakest when the latter have the imprudence to use incautiously the liberty they believe they themselves have.

1. On 25 July the Committee of the Whole House of the New York Convention recommended that the Constitution be ratified and that recommendatory amendments be approved. The next day the Convention adopted the Committee's report.

2. Another French diplomat, Victor DuPont, also made disparaging remarks about the procession.

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