

**THE WEST IN THE
DIPLOMACY OF THE
AMERICAN REVOLUTION**

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The West in the Diplomacy of the American Revolution by Paul Chrisler Phillips

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PAUL CHRISLER PHILLIPS

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BY

PAUL CHRISLER PHILLIPS, A.M.

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MAIN

PREFACE

In this essay I have tried to show to what extent and in what respects the Mississippi Valley was a subject of diplomatic negotiations in the American Revolution. Altho many different views have been advanced on this question, I do not believe that any American scholar has, as yet, made any considerable use of the material available in this country and Europe for the purpose of getting at the exact truth. Doniol did not appreciate the importance of the West in the diplomacy of the American Revolution, and, altho he quotes many important documents bearing on the subject, he omits many of the most valuable, and in no sense does he attempt to explain the whole question.

This study is written almost entirely from the sources and some of its conclusions differ from those commonly accepted, while in other cases, I believe additional light has been thrown upon facts already established. Altho Spain's ambition to get control of the lands bordering on the Gulf of Mexico and the Mississippi is well known, I do not think that the definite purpose back of her tortuous and apparently vacillating policy has ever been properly explained. Vergennes's professions of friendship for the United States and his opposition to their claims to the West have been regarded too long as proof of his duplicity. Vergennes himself did not regard his policy towards the West as unfriendly to his ally, or as inconsistent with the terms of the treaty of alliance, and, at no time, did he attempt to conceal his views. The evidence shows beyond doubt that he was conceding to the United States all he thought they had a right to claim. The main outlines of British policy are already well understood, but the efforts of Shelburne to detach the Americans from the French alliance have not received the attention they deserve. The greatness of Franklin as a diplomat appears in a new light when it

is understood that, but for the obstinacy of Jay and Adams, he would have obtained for his country the richest parts of Canada.

To establish the facts herein set forth, the archives of Washington, London, and Paris have been searched in addition to a careful reading of all available printed material. I regret that I could not go through the archives of Spain; but I found, in the French foreign office, copies of many Spanish documents obtained by the French ambassadors and agents during the years from 1774 to 1783.

For assistance in preparing this study I am indebted to Professors Evarts B. Greene, Guy Stanton Ford, and Laurence M. Larson of the University of Illinois. I desire also to express my thanks to Mr. Waldo G. Leland of Washington, D. C., for much valuable help and advice while I was working in the archives of Washington and Paris.

To Professor Clarence W. Alvord of the University of Illinois I must acknowledge my greatest obligations. While I was working on this investigation he carefully and painstakingly went over all the material with me, and gave me his time to discuss and analyze every point; and during my study with him he offered many valuable suggestions and helpful criticisms which have added much to the thoroughness of my work.

Notwithstanding my efforts and the assistance of my friends, I realize that there are many weak spots in the study as here presented. On some points the material is not absolutely conclusive, and there are doubtless many valuable documents which I have not unearthed. I hope, however, that in spite of many defects, this essay has added something worth while to our knowledge of the West in the diplomatic negotiations of the American Revolution.

P. C. P.

CONTENTS

Abbreviations	6
Chapter I—The Origins	7—26
Chapter II—Vergennes and Spanish Diplomacy.....	27—57
Chapter III—The Question of the West.....	58—68
Chapter IV—The French Alliance.....	69—90
Chapter V—Florida Blanca and the Convention with France.....	91—107
Chapter VI—Development of a Congressional Policy toward the West	108—130
Chapter VII—Vergennes and the Allies of France.....	131—149
Chapter VIII—Luzerne and the Pretensions of Spain.....	150—172
Chapter IX—Triumph of the Anti-Gallican Party.....	173—188
Chapter X—The close of the War.....	189—202
Chapter XI—Vergennes and the Negotiations for Peace.....	203—215
Chapter XII—Peace	216—227
Bibliography	228—238
Index	239—247

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

- Arc. Aff. Etr.—Archives des Affaires Etrangères.
Am. Hist. Rev.—American Historical Review.
Angre.—Angleterre.
Arc. Col.—Archives des Colonies.
Bt. Trs.—British Transcripts.
C. O.—Colonial Office.
Dip. Cor.—Diplomatic Correspondence.
Esp.—Espagne.
E. U.—Etats Unis.
F. O.—Foreign Office.
L. C.—Library of Congress.
Nou. Acq. franc.—Nouvelles Acquisitions françaises.
P. R. O.—Public Record Office.
S. M. C. or Sa. Maj. Chr.—Sa Majesté Chrétienne.
S. M. Cath.—Sa Majesté Catholique.
U. of W.—University of Wisconsin.
()—manuscript illegible.
[]—word supplied.