

Note on this Translation

The translation which follows is not necessarily top quality, nor is it very pretty – but at least gives readers, with no special skills in the French language, the chance to read the book.

The translation was made using the impressive online translation tool *DeepL* :

<https://www.deepl.com/translator>

The more obvious errors arising from this automated translation have been corrected manually by myself.

The source for the translation is the original edition published in Paris in 1906. This is accessible online here: <https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k104541k.r>

A re-issue dated 2006 can be viewed and purchased here:

http://www.bibliothequemalgache.com/fiches/059_Cultru.html

I have kept to the original pagination (of the 1906 edition) as far as possible; inevitably, a line or two is sometimes held back on one page or pushed forward on to the next. And the flow of text looks a bit odd in places. But this pagination will allow passages of interest to be double-checked easily against the French original.

Although it is the French fashion to place the table of contents at the end of a book, I have placed it at the beginning here.

I have added, at the end, a glossary of place-names and names of some of the main players in the story.

In the footnotes, the words ‘A.C. Fonds’ signify ‘*Archive Coloniale* Collection’ in the French official archives. The footnotes are a mixture of Cultru’s (those marked with an *asterisk) and mine.

The words ‘*noirs*’, ‘*nègres*’ and ‘*blancs*’ are used frequently by Cultru and by the people he quotes; these have been translated simply as they are – ‘blacks’, ‘negroes’ and ‘whites’ – although we would now prefer ‘natives’, ‘Africans/Malagasy people’ (or ‘slaves’) and ‘Europeans’. However, to retain a feel for the original, the translation makes no pretence at modern acceptable renderings.

Most spellings of placenames have been retained as in the original.

Andy Drummond (editor)

May 2022

Prosper Cultru

**An Emperor
of Madagascar**
in the XVIIIth century

—

Benyowszky

PARIS
Augustin Challamel, Publisher
Rue Jacob, 17

—
Maritime and Colonial Series

1906

Prosper Cultru (1862-1917)
was a French historian,
and one of the pioneers of the history of colonialism.
He was a professor of colonial history at the Sorbonne in Paris
from 1906 onwards.

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PREFACE

There is no story more like a novel than that of Baron Benyowszky; few authors among those whose imagination is praised have lent their characters as many adventures as he attributes to himself in his *Memoirs*.

That this Hungarian gentleman, fighting for the freedom of Poland, fell into the hands of the Russians, was exiled beyond the Sea of Okhotsk, in regions hardly traversed until then by fur hunters, one will agree that there was material there for beautiful memories of travel and which would perhaps have compensated for the sufferings of the exile by the glory of the explorer. In 1770, the distant provinces of the Tsarist empire, empty steppes, the inert forests of extreme Siberia, and the icy ports of the Pacific, where no ship from Europe had ever landed, were hardly known. But this exile, which would be the most notable event of a life together, is only the first, almost the least of it. As soon as he reached Kamchatka, the baron raised the other banished men, seized the town of Bolsheretzka and reduced the garrison to a state of mercy. On a fifty-ton boat, he ventured out into the unknown seas off the coast of Tartary; after five months of hazardous navigation, he reached Macao, finally found Europeans and the assurance of freedom.

Welcomed by the head of the French trading post in China, he arrived in Lorient with his companions, having almost circumnavigated the old continent. Another would have returned to Hungary, wishing at least for rest; but he seemed unable to undergo the discipline of an ordered society. He agreed to go and found an establishment in Madagascar in the name of the King of France. Soon, his letters announced that he had created a town, set up trading posts, cleared the land, explored the entire island and tamed the natives. However, complaints also reached Paris; the administrators of the neighbouring colonies contradicted his reports and incriminated his actions: an enquiry was ordered, after which, dissatisfied but not disgraced, Benyowszky returned to France. He was received well there, despite the unfavourable investigation, he was given a pension, he was appointed brigadier in the suite; but, still worried, he returned to Austria, Colonel of hussars in Bohemia, businessman in Fiume, volunteer in America, where he arrived too late, the war over, pursuing everywhere and in vain the fortune, he ended up offering to the princes in search of new lands, his pretended kingdom of Madagascar. Rejected by the English ministers, he persuaded an inexperienced mathematician, persuaded five or six ruined gentlemen, drew some money from two slave traders, fired a ship and returned to those he called his subjects to trade them for the benefit of his backers. But the enterprise collapsed in a catastrophe: to obtain supplies, he had pillaged a French post; attacked by our troops, he perished with his arms in his hands.

It is not surprising that such a man should have embellished with more or less happy fictions his memoirs, which were written mainly to seduce shareholders; moreover, his official correspondence with the Minister of the Navy proves that he did not believe himself bound in the least to describe things as they were. He is not the first traveller to have taken some liberties with the truth; but it can be said that he went far beyond the bounds of the licence allowed to people who speak well of themselves,

it is therefore impossible to accept without a severe examination its slightest assertions ; and yet, even stripping it of the errors and falsehoods it contains, one remains in the presence of one of the most extraordinary tales of adventure that can be read, and this magnate of Hungary, *Ampansacabé*, sovereign lord or, to put it better, emperor of Madagascar, who has ministers, armies, a capital and yet lodges the devil in his purse, came at the right time in the last years of a century which knew the king of Corsica, Theodore de Neuhof, was the dupe of Cagliostro and saw the birth of Alexandre Dumas.

The material for this study was taken from the colonial archives (Madagascar and Ile-de-France collections), which contain the entire file in originals or certified copies, and from the archives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, where the Asia collection (vol. 18) contains the documents seized from the Baron's wallet on his death. The introductions by Captain Pasfield Oliver at the head of the two English editions of the *Memoirs* which he published in 1893 and 1904 have provided valuable information; at the end of the second edition is a very complete bibliography of works which, in one way or another, relate to Benyowszky. Finally, M. A. Lirondelle has taken the trouble to analyse for us at the British Museum the text of the account of Ivan Ryoumin, one of the Russians who were taken by force to Macao and from there to France. Thanks to this witness, the escape and the journey gain in the eyes of the historian what they lose in the eyes of the fiction lover.

FIRST CHAPTER

Benyowszky's youth. - He moves to Poland. - Exiled to Kamchatka, he seized the town of Bolsheretzka and escaped by sea. - He reached Macao by following the coast of Japan. - Welcomed by the chiefs of the French trading post, he went to the Île de France and arrived in Lorient in 1772.

In June 1772, a letter from China appeared in the *Gentleman's Magazine* in London, which aroused great public curiosity. It told of a strange-looking vessel that had arrived in Canton: there were 65 people on board, including 5 women, and the commander was named Baron Benyorsky. Taken prisoner in Poland by the Russians, transported to Kazan, he had, with others, escaped from this fortress, after having defeated the soldiers who guarded it. He was able to reach Kamchatka, where a friend provided him with a ship. He then sailed for China; but, carried against his will eastwards, he had to follow the coast of America to the 57th degree. Prevented by the headwind from reaching Acapulco, he had tried to reach the Philippines, but was unable to land there. Six months had passed since he left Kamchatka, when he had reached Macao.

A letter from the baron himself was then published, giving an account of his trip in bad French:

"Sent to prison, year 1769. Brought into exile together with princes P. Soltyk, bishop of Cracovia, P. Kanguszkó, P. Rzsevisky, P. Pacz, bishop of Kiovo. In Kamchatka under 63 degree of north latitude, 175 longitude, the year 1771.

"In "the month of May, went out on the galliot *St. Peter*, passing to 238 degrees of Longitude, to 57 Latitude, whence to sail to pass the island Mariain; by the great storm and strong winds became to Japan in from the proximity of the port Namgu put the foot to the Land; from there came to the island Touza and Bonzo, from there until Nangeasaki, from where, after having taken food, left and passed by the islands Amuy until Formosa, and the island Baschet, finally took the course straight to Macao where I arrived in the month of September 1771 the Year. Went out with 85 men, arrived with 62."

The note was signed: "Baron Maurice-Auguste d'Aladar de Benyorsky, Colonelle de S. M. Impériale, Régimenter des Confédérés.

A certain M. Nathaniel Barlow, who was then in Macao, having asked him again for some information about his journey, the baron replied that he had been sent secretly by the queen of Hungary, with a corps of 500 soldiers, to the aid of the Catholic confederates of Poland at war with the Protestants supported by the Russians. No sooner had he joined the confederate troops than he was attacked by the enemies, beaten, taken with most of his men and sent to Siberia. There, treated very cruelly, they had managed to escape, seizing the garrison, then reduced to very few people, and had gone to Kamchatka to embark. Having once served on Malta's galleys, he had enough nautical knowledge to attempt to follow the coast to China. The winds blew him away and forced him to sail north-east in search of islands he believed existed in that direction. He landed at a place he thought was close to the coast of America, took supplies and tried to reach Acapulco;

but, forced by the winds to give it up, he tried to reach the Philippines, touched the Marianas and, unable to reach Manila because of the unfavourable weather, he headed for Macao, where he finally arrived after four months of travel. The vessel which carried him was 50 feet long and 16 feet wide, built entirely of fir and weighed 80 tons.

Finally, the French bishop Le Bon wrote from Macao on 24 September 1771: "Yesterday a ship with a Hungarian flag arrived in Macao, commanded by the Hungarian baron M. A. Aladar Benyorsky, adviser to Prince Albert, Duc de Saxony, Colonel of Her Royal and Imperial Apostolic Majesty the Queen of Hungary and officer in a regiment of the Republic and Crown of Poland. This gentleman, after having received seven wounds in a fight against the Russians, near Kaminiec, was made prisoner of war and taken to the same town where Prince Szoltitz, bishop of Cracow, senator of Poland, is being held as a prisoner of state. The baron found a way to escape, after having received a patent from the prisoner prince-bishop, which exhorts all Catholics above all to help the aforementioned lord Aladar Benyorsky, in order to give him the means to reach the Emperor of Germany and the Holy Apostolic See. The patent of the prelate is dated from his prison on 6 November 1770. Of the 54 men in the crew, the captain had only 8 healthy men left: the rest were on the bed. For two months they had been suffering from hunger and thirst. Twice his boat has been broken: twice they have mended it. He knows neither Portuguese nor Spanish; but he speaks Latin, French and German. He came from the north and went to Japan."

These various accounts, if they agree on the substance of the adventure, do not agree on the details. This is undoubtedly due to the imagination of the hero who was already beginning to make a career for himself. His real name was Maurice-Auguste, Baron Benyowsky, according to the Hungarian spelling, Benyowszky, according to his own signature. He claimed to have been born in Verbowa, his family's homeland;

in the county of Neutra, in the year 1741. He was the son of Baron Samuel Aladar de Benyowszky, whom he claimed to have been a cavalry general-major in the service of Austria. When he passed through the Île de France in 1772, he told the governor, Chevalier Desroches, that he was of Polish origin and the thirteenth baron of the name. His grandfather had gone to Transylvania at the invitation of the emperor, and the latter had given his family a considerable state in that province, which he wanted to repopulate. His early youth was spent in Vienna in the work and exercises usual to young noblemen; at the age of 14 he entered the army as a second lieutenant. One would like to be certain of all this: but never has methodical doubt been better justified than in this story where, from the very beginning, contradictions abound. Thus, according to the last English editor of the *Memoirs*, Captain Pasfield Oliver, the parish registers of Verbowa fix the birth of the baron at the year 1746.

He claims to have been present at the battles of Lobositz in 1756, Prague in 1757, and Domstadt in 1758, first as a lieutenant, then as a captain, then as an aide-de-camp to Marshal Laudon. Whatever the age at which the young nobles of that time could receive a rank, it is impossible for him to have taken part in these campaigns, if he was born in 1746. This date accepted, as it seems difficult not to do so, the *Memoirs*, from the first page, are found to contain strong errors, not to say worse. They are further contradicted by an autograph statement of Benyowszky's services, according to which he neither belonged to the same regiments nor held the same ranks that he later attributed to himself. In 1762, after the death of his father, he left the Austrian army to join the Polish army and, from 1763 to 1767, he was a major in the Kalicz-Cavalry regiment.

To Desroches he declared that he had left the service, not being able to accommodate his colonel, and that he had retired to Transylvania to devote himself solely to study.

According to the *Memoirs*, he went to Poland to take possession of the inheritance of an uncle, a dignitary of the Republic. His father having died in the meantime, his brothers-in-law seized the property that belonged to him and prevented him by force from entering the hereditary manor. He then gathered some of his vassals, armed them and established himself on his land, sword in hand. Accused by his relatives and allies, treated as a disturber of the public peace, he was condemned by the chancellery of Vienna and forced to flee to Poland. It must be admitted that this account is in keeping with what we know of his character; it also seems to be true. It is easy to understand why he passed over this adventure in silence in his discussions with Desroches as well as in his records of service. Thus it is easy to explain his entry into the Polish army, the only resource of a banished man. It was then that he married Mlle. Henska, daughter of a local nobleman. Did he then travel, as he tells us, to Germany, Holland and England? Did he spend a year in Paris? This is highly doubtful. He was still in Warsaw in 1764, when Stanislaus Augustus was elected. We owe little more credence to his travels than to his caravans on the Maltese galleys. "He was about to leave for the Indies, he says, when he was recalled by the Polish confederates." He could not remember, when he wrote this, about 1784, having written anywhere else in his hand that from 1763 to 1767 he had been a major in the Kalicz-Cavalry and that military discipline, however easy it is supposed to be in Poland, should not give officers licence to go to the Indies. So, back in Krakow, he was, according to him, appointed by the confederates colonel, regimental general, commander of the cavalry and quartermaster general. It is surprising to see such a young and completely unknown officer honoured with so many honours. The Polish chiefs, as we know, were jealous of each other, sometimes fought among themselves, and poached their troops. And these troops, all of them cavalry, recruited from gentlemen who all considered themselves to be equal, without discipline or obedience, formed a dozen wandering corps of a very small number.

Benyowszky, in spite of the ranks he attributes to himself, has not left his mark on Polish Confederation history. It is impossible to accept as accurate the personal feats of arms which he enumerates and details, not without committing serious errors, when he mixes the account of his exploits with that of authentic events. It must be assumed that he exercised some subordinate command in the bands of Czarnećky and Pulawsky, without ever having accomplished anything remarkable. Taken prisoner once by the Russians, he bought his freedom for 2,000 ducats. Caught in a fight in Podolia, wounded by two sabre shots and a machine-gun wound, he was transferred from Kyiv to Kazan and from there to Kaluga. This was in the summer of 1769. It seems likely that he and other prisoners formed a plan of escape; it was nothing less than to seize the place with the complicity of the Russian commander himself. The plot was discovered, the baron was arrested and taken to St. Petersburg; he says that he appeared there before a minister; he even names Orlof and Czernicheff, perhaps to give himself importance. This would be the reason why he was deported to Kamchatka, from where one hardly ever returned. It was in December 1769 that he left St Petersburg for this distant and dreaded exile. He had been shackled; his only luggage was a sheepskin: but at the same time a Swede, Major Wymblath, several Russian officers, Lieutenant of the Guards Vasily Panov, Captain Ippolit Stepanov and a few others condemned to end their lives in Siberia, among whom he was to find friends and accomplices, left with him. The convoy passed through Moscow, Nizhny Novgorod and reached Tobolsk towards the end of January 1770. The inhabitants of the town, touched by the distress of the banished, took up a collection for them which produced a few hundred roubles; then the march began again, interminably. They passed through Krasnoiarsk, Yakutsk and arrived in Okhotsk, probably on 16 October 1770.

They embarked there on one of the sloops which made the crossing to Bolsha and landed there after a few days; their journey had lasted almost a year. Benyowszky's memoirs give few details of the then almost unknown lands he crossed: it seems that he did not deign to see them: on the other hand, his imagination does not slumber and adventures crowd into his narrative without the slightest concern for verisimilitude.

He tells us, for example, that in Yakutsk a Russian surgeon named Hofmann, who was to accompany the convoy, suggested that as soon as they reached Kamchatka they should take a ship of some kind and return to Europe by sea. This was the very idea of the plan that he later carried out. But when it was time to leave, Hofmann fell ill and remained in Yakutsk, while the others set off again under the escort of some Cossacks. After a few days, on the point of expiring, he confessed to the governor of the town the plot formed with Benyowszky. A courier was immediately sent to the officer in command at Okhotsk, with orders to imprison the baron and his companions as soon as they arrived. Fortunately, the man joined the little caravan still on the way, announced the death of Hofmann and that compromising papers had been discovered in his house. Benyowszky, worried to the utmost, managed to get the soldiers drunk, to steal the letter and the orders of the governor of Yakutsk from the courier: having read them, he wrote other, quite different ones: thus the surgeon's singular treachery was thwarted. But how can we believe that in the middle of the steppe, prisoners who had nothing, who were constantly watched, could have forged official letters, and given them such an exact appearance that the bearer and the recipient were deceived? Nor does it appear that the governor of Yakutsk ever questioned his colleague in Okhotsk about this matter, although he had the time to do so during Benyowszky's six-month stay in Kamchatka.

The story of a storm that assailed the sloop on which the exiles made the short crossing of the Sea of Okhotsk may also be considered as a fabricated episode: the captain and all the officers were successively injured by a complaisant chance, the baron took command and saved the ship; but the hurricane threw him on Sakhalien Island; there he proposed to the Russian sailors to land in Korea, they refused and forced him to return to the mouth of the Bolsha.

He also claims that Colonel Nilov, Governor of Kamchatka, thanked him warmly for this brilliant action; one can only admire the discretion shown by the sailors on this well-characterised escape attempt.

At the mouth of the river there were only a few isbas, forming the hamlet of Tchekawka. The governor's residence was situated five leagues from the coast: it was only a village of about 500 houses, inhabited by Cossacks and merchants, There were several lines of low buildings, each of which contained five or six dwellings joined together by a long common passage, dividing the building lengthwise. There was also a church, barracks for the soldiers and numerous *balagans*, the summer houses of the natives. The baron attributes to the Bolshoretzkoy ostrog a garrison of 280 men occupying a bastioned fortress, armed with 20 cannon. The total population of the Russian settlements would have been 364 soldiers, 29 officers, 422 hunters, 1,500 Cossacks with their officers, 25 civil servants, 82 merchants, 700 descendants of exiles and finally 1,600 exiles. Contemporary accounts do not agree with this description; Stepanov says that the distance from the sea to Bolaheretz is 40 versts and Captain King, of Cook's expedition, who visited the country in 1779, estimates it at 22 English miles, According to the latter, it was situated on the north bank of the Bolsha, or Bolchoireka, between the mouths of two streams, the Gottsofka and the Bistraia, which flow into the river, which is two or three fathoms deep at this point and about 200 toises wide. ¹

1 'toise' - old French measure of length, slightly under 2 metres (6 feet or 72 inches).

The houses, all of the same shape, were built of wood and covered with bark or roughly woven rushes. The governor's house, in 1779, was much larger than the others: it consisted of three large rooms, carpeted with a pretty paper; but the window panes were made of talcum sheets. King puts the number of soldiers and Cossacks at only about 400, divided between the five posts of Nichnei, Verchnei, Tigil, Bolsheretz or Petropaulovsky. The indigenous population had even fallen to the figure of 3,000 individuals, the smallpox having claimed more than 20,000 victims in 1767. He saw a barracks and some stores in the chief town, but no fortress, contrary to Benyowszky's account. There were only 12 fur traders, forming a company instituted by Catherine II; the other traders were only Cossacks. It is easy to see why the baron exaggerates the population and the number of soldiers to the point of implausibility, why he invents the existence of a fortress and even provides it with artillery. When he was brought to Bolsheretz, he found himself under the authority of a governor who was considered to be very harsh; the already harsh fate of the banished was, it seems, made even worse. And yet what an overwhelming fate! Ten years later, King saw one of them, named Iwaskin, a gentleman who had been a page to the Empress Elizabeth and an ensign in the guards. This unfortunate man, at the age of 16, had been knifed and had had his nose split open. Exiled to Kamchatka for thirty-one years, he had spent twenty of them without receiving any help from the administration; he had lived all this time, in the manner of the natives, on the product of his hunting. "Each of the newcomers was given," says Benyowszky, "a musket, a spear, tools, and some provisions; they were allowed to build themselves a hut in the neighbourhood, from which they were forbidden to depart without permission: they owed the State a certain quantity of furs per annum." Such was the harsh law of exile.

But we almost immediately fall back into implausibility if we accept the rest of the account: the dates that the baron indicates with surprising precision are there only to give him the appearance of daily notes and to lure the reader with the appearance of accuracy. Let us judge for ourselves: he had arrived in Bolsheretzka on 1 December 1770: on the 5th, he claimed to have formed an association with a view to escape; he was appointed its leader and all his companions swore to obey him blindly, to kill whoever betrayed him. On the 6th, Governor Nilov gives him as a teacher of foreign languages to his two daughters; the eldest, Aphanasia, falls in love with him on the 7th; it is unfortunate that their existence is nothing less than proven. That very day, having gone to the chancellor's house, he finds him playing chess with the hetman Kolossov. The chancellor was not surprised by the visit: moreover, seeing his game compromised, he proposed to the exile to finish it for him; the latter accepted, beat the hetman and made him lose 1,500 roubles. These Cossacks are really easy to talk to and have a familiar mood. This is nothing yet: amazed by his skill, they offer the winner to play 50 games of chess, at a stake of 300 roubles each, against the richest merchants of the city: he will receive 60 roubles for each game won; for them, they reserve the stakes. The deal was concluded without consulting the merchants; then, at the very last moment, moving on to a new idea, Sudeikin and Kolossov invited him to open a public school where children could learn languages, arithmetic, geography and other sciences for 5 roubles a month. The two proposals do not seem to fit together very well: one would have had to find many pupils and teach foreign languages for many years to amass the thousands of roubles that Benyowszky earned, if one is to believe him, from just five games of chess won from the naive merchants of Bolsheretzka. Conspiracy, love, gambling, our Hungarian has it all down pat.

On 9 December, the young Aphanasia reveals her nascent and already overflowing passion to him;

on the 10th, 20 new associates joined the conspiracy; on that day, Nilov, who will no doubt be found to be ill-informed, appointed Benyowszky as head of all the exiles. Can so many events take place in ten days? The author of the *Memoirs* does not ask himself these questions: it is because it would perhaps have been difficult to answer them. On 12 December, Benyowszky, with 16 exiles, went on a bear hunt; these fearsome animals, which the Russian and Kamchatka hunters only approached with the greatest precautions, at the risk of the most serious danger, in front of this new Nemrod, seemed like timid hares: in one day, he killed 8. On 15 December, 98 seal-hunting sailors offered to kidnap their ship and escape with him: they all forgot, of course, that in December the ports of Kamchatka were closed by ice and that an escape by sea was only possible in May. On 9 January 1771, a new twist: the baron was declared free by Nilov for having denounced a plot against the government. From Captain King's account, it appears that in 1779 the governor had no right to change the residence of an exile or even to increase the allowances fixed for him. It seems that ten years earlier this was not the case. Nilov went even further: he asked for the title of Lieutenant-General of the police for the banished man he was protecting and who was to pay him for so much ingratitude, he granted him his daughter's hand in marriage, he authorised him to found a colony at Cape Lopatka, and even the exiles who settled there were to be declared free as having rendered a service to the state. The hetman of the Cossacks, the naive Kolossov, agrees with the baron to conquer California; the baron will be governor of Kamchatka, Nilov governor of Okhotsk, the hetman will have the Aleutian Islands and the Senate of St. Petersburg will be asked to sanction the accomplished facts. To celebrate his extraordinary fortune, the baron gave a party to the merchants of Bolsheretzka: he appeared in the middle of the ball, dressed in a red satin suit embroidered with gold, offered by the exiles, who were themselves also richly dressed.

Let us admire the change in the condition of these men, who five weeks before received from the then less generous governor a few tools to build a hut, a spear and a musket to hunt bear, and who now freely give a ball, where they appear in costumes where gold and silk sparkle.

However, the conspiracy, which was perhaps less justified against such a debonair jailer, continued to grow. It is certainly not probable that it was prepared at such length: formed in December, if we are to believe Benyowszky, it only broke out in April: it seems difficult to keep such an agreement secret for so long.

But our narrator laughs at such objections: to make his fable more attractive, he introduces various incidents, which he does not bother to reconcile. Attacked one day by two Russian merchants from Bolsheretzka, he kills one and wounds the other; this ambush and murder are not investigated. Denounced to the governor by one of his associates, Pianitsin, he condemned him to death and had him executed by the others; as for Nilov, on receiving the accusing letter, doubtless unaware that there was an exile by the name of Pianitsin, he sent for a soldier of the garrison, who bore the same name. This man understood nothing of the questions put to him and Nilov did not bother with the case. Another conspirator, Levantiev, a traitor like Pianitsin, is punished like him, with no further consequences for the murderers; three men have died violent deaths: no one is concerned about them, no one has suspected anything. This is how everything succeeds the heroes of the novel. The baron, however, in February 1771, made a trip to Cape Lopatka; there he drew on the snow-covered plain the plan of the future city of Nilovaga, the limits of the estates where marvellous harvests would soon grow, where innumerable herds would come to graze. Thus, three years later, the same fertile invention would create cities and arsenals in Madagascar, the seductive and fantastic lines of which would be presented to the ministers of Louis XV on complaisant maps.

We have just seen him mix these audacious chimeras with a love adventure: what novel can do without it? So the necessary character, the impatient Aphanasia, on December 9, from the second meeting, had revealed her feelings to the hero, with a frankness, he says, and a simplicity that would have been quite astonishing in European countries; and this is not, indeed, without surprise. On the 9th of January, a month later, the governor granted the banished man the hand of his daughter. But every passion must have its crossroads; another banished man, Stepanov, challenged the fiancé to a duel; he too, but in vain and from afar, was burning for Aphanasia. On the field, the baron triumphs over his rival, grants him mercy and declares, moreover, that he will have no claim on the girl, being already married in Poland; he therefore promises the stunned, repentant and delighted vanquished to hand her over to him when they next escape. It does not appear that the ungrateful man consulted the poor lover on this point. But the events follow one another, repeating themselves somewhat; Stepanov, distraught once again by the announcement of Benyowszky's forthcoming marriage, threatens to denounce the conspiracy. Then a scene takes place in which the writer seems to want to reproduce the gloomy initiations of the Rosicrucians. At midnight, in front of all the masked accomplices, Stepanov, condemned to die, is forced to empty a cup of poison. Fortunately, Benyowszky, still magnanimous and more lenient towards this guilty man for love than towards Pianitsin and Levantiev, has poured a harmless liquid into the cup: the traitor, this time, is only punished by the terror he has experienced.

The baron places at this time (February 1771) his first relations with a pilot named Csurin, who commanded the mail steamer, the *Saint-Peter-and-Saint-Paul*; this man had, it seems, a lawsuit in progress in Okhotsk and was afraid to return there; he let himself be won. It is possible that the sailors and the pilot came to spend the winter in Bolsheretzka, since there were only a few huts at the mouth of the river, that this Csurin, for the reason given by Benyowszky or for any other, was part of the plot.

It was, in fact, necessary for the fugitives to have an accomplice sailor to direct their escape; otherwise, nothing would have been easier than to deceive them as to the direction given to the vessel and to throw it on the coast of Siberia or on one of the Kuril Islands occupied by the Russians.

We come at last to the execution of the conspiracy. The baron's account of the days leading up to it and of the revolt itself cannot be accepted as accurate.

Here are the really incoherent features: there was then in Bolsheretzka a certain Ismailov, a fur hunter, who in 1779, according to King's testimony, commanded a hunting station in one of the Aleutian Islands; Benyowszky makes him sometimes a simple sailor, sometimes the nephew of the chancellor Sudeikin, in any case, one of the conspirators. This man denounces the escape plan to his uncle, he denounces the execution of the traitor Levantiev, he reveals enough to lose the baron if the Russian officers do their duty. This happened on 11 April. If one accepts this treason as true, it is hard to understand why Benyowszky was not immediately arrested. Yet he says that he was ill and remained peacefully at home from 12 to 20 April. Nilov did not give any sign of life: it is undoubtedly because he cannot trust his future son-in-law. However, on the 22nd, the baron gathered his friends, armed them and began to guard himself militarily. Aphanasie, an accomplice for love, must send him a red ribbon as a signal, if the governor prepares any ambush against him. On the 25th, he receives the ribbon. Indeed, on that day the governor invites him to dinner with the intention of seizing him. Benyowszky replied that he was ill. In the afternoon, the hetman Kolossov turned up and threatened to have him arrested. He had committed the imprudence of coming without an escort to seize a leader of conspirators, when he had 700 Cossacks in the town: he paid dearly for his foolishness: it was he who was taken prisoner. The next day, 26th, at about 5 o'clock in the evening, the governor decided to send four men and a corporal to seize the rebel:

they did not reappear. He then sent two detachments with cannon at 9 o'clock in the middle of the night; but, greeted with rifle fire by the assembled conspirators, they were dispersed and pursued, and the rebels penetrated the fort without a fight, the sentry having lowered the bridge at their approach, taking them for his comrades. The fort, where there were only 12 men left, was taken without difficulty; Nilov, surprised in his flats, was killed stiffly, before the eyes of his future son-in-law, a well-deserved punishment for his stupidity, if things had really happened as Benyowszky tells us. 700 Cossacks were staying in the town; they finally took up arms. It must be assumed that the shots fired in the evening were not heard, that the fugitives did not warn anyone, just as it must be assumed that Major Nilov remained for two days (25 and 26 April) in the presence of a declared uprising without taking any military measures, without having prepared to defend himself, without even having called the Cossacks and the inhabitants of the town to him. On the morning of the 27th, the Cossacks and inhabitants, gathered in the neighbouring woods, prepared to attack the fort; but the baron had the women and children, numbering more than a thousand, locked up in the church and threatened to set it on fire if the Russians did not lay down their arms within two hours. This atrocious stratagem succeeded: everyone submitted. This is what we read in the *Memoirs*. Here is the truth about this scuffle, as it can be inferred from the accounts given at the time by the victor himself and by eyewitnesses Stepanov and the scribe Ryoumin.

Stepanov seems to have had some quarrel with his chief, the cause of which we do not know; but it goes without saying that there can be no question of a love rivalry; he shows his dislike for his enemy by never referring to him by name. He had lived in Kamchatka for eight months in the most profound misery, when he formed with some companions the project of escaping, in a small boat, to the Chinese coast which faces the opening of the Sea of Okhotsk.

With this in mind, they were to attempt to seize one of the two-masted ships used for beaver hunting. They intended to reach Guam Island, one of the Marianas, and from there to Europe. The governor of Bolsheretzka having, at the beginning of spring, treated the exiles with greater harshness than usual, Stepanov gathered together those who had adopted his plan; they numbered 32; this number was sufficient to seize all the inhabitants of the place who might appear dangerous. The plan was carried out on 18 April (old style), which corresponds to 27 (new style). The conspirators seized the state treasury and the food stores, disarmed the garrison and went to Tchekawka, 40 versts ¹ from Bolsheretzka; they arrived there on 1 May. Now, in Macau, Benyowszky told that having been sent to Siberia and very cruelly treated, he had been able to escape by seizing the garrison, which was then reduced to very few people, no doubt because of the smallpox epidemic which decimated the population. He went to Kamchatka (Tchekawka, the port of Bolsheretzka, should be understood here) to embark. When he arrived at the Île de France, he gave precise details; he said that he had been locked up in the fortress or at least placed under the guard of an officer called Guresinin, who agreed with him and provided the necessary weapons. It seems that the governor became suspicious and wanted to have the baron taken to another place. But Guresinin's complicity made it possible to attempt an attack on the fort during the night of 27 April. The next day, the soldiers and Cossacks wanted to retake the town with their weapons in hand, but the inhabitants, frightened by Benyowszky's audacity and cruel stratagem, surrendered on the 28th. "I entered the town of Kamchatka (Tchekawka) in triumph," the baron recounts, "I went down to the port and seized three ships. I chose the strongest and dismantled the others."

1 1 verst = 1.067 kms, or 0.663 miles

He therefore makes no mention in these accounts of the extraordinary adventures which were to embellish the *Memoirs* published fifteen years later. In the presence of the Russians who accompanied him, it would perhaps have been very difficult for him to disguise the truth too much. It was not in his interest to do so; it was on his geographical discoveries that he counted to capture attention, whereas, around 1786, after the publication of Cook's voyages, he had to arouse interest by romantic accounts that no witness could control. Stepanov and Benyowszky agree that the garrison was very weak, unable to resist the attack of thirty determined men. Is it believable that the soldiers and the inhabitants in a position to fight, who were so few in number, only gave in to the fear of seeing their children and women burned alive? This act of ferocity, quite in keeping with oriental mores, obviously seems very licit to the narrator; but the other witnesses do not mention it; in any case, the number of women is absurdly exaggerated, as is that of the Cossacks, which Benyowszky puts at 800.

As for the scribe Ryoumin, witness and victim of the event, he gives no details of the organisation of the plot; he only says that Benyowszky (whom he always calls Beysposk or the Hungarian) was the main author. He and the Swede Wymblath (about whom the *Memoirs* say nothing), at the head of the mutineers, Poles and vagabonds, attacked Nilov's house by surprise at night and killed him in his bedroom. They then reduced the chancellery where the ammunition and supplies were, and established a strong guard there after having taken prisoners the few soldiers on duty who did not dare to resist. The town was small and unfortified, and there were only 70 Cossacks, including the old men and children; but not all of them were there. It was during the night of 26-27 April.

On the morning of the 27th, Benyowszky had the scribes Spiridon Soudeikin and Ivan Ryoumin seized and locked up as hostages in the chancellery, along with a few others, but they were not mistreated. He had eleven flatboats prepared, loaded his associates and hostages onto them, took all the able-bodied Cossacks as boatmen and arrived on 30 April at Tchekawka, where he seized the corvette *St Peter and St Paul*.

The enterprise, even reduced to the proportions it has in the contemporary accounts of Ryoumin, Stepanov and Benyowszky himself, i.e. to the removal of a mediocre barracks and a garrison reduced to a few men, is nevertheless a daring exploit. It left the inhabitants with a terrible memory of which we have one testimony: that of a foreigner, the English captain King. When this officer landed in the port of Petropaulowsky in April 1779, he sent the governor of Bolsheretz letters written by this Ismailov, whom he had met in one of the Aleutian Islands. Ismailov denounced the English as pirates or perhaps even French. The Russian officers thought to take defensive measures and the governor could only with great difficulty prevent the inhabitants from fleeing into the woods. The English later learned that an exiled Polish officer, taking advantage of the confusion and disorder in Bolsheretz, had once organised an uprising there in which the provincial commander had lost his life. He had seized a galliot and forcibly embarked a sufficient number of sailors for the manoeuvre. Most of the Russians who had been transported to Europe on French ships had returned to St. Petersburg and from there to Kamchatka; they had brought back the fear of the French, who had welcomed the formidable Benyowszky.

Having therefore obliged all able-bodied men to follow him to Tchekawka, the baron saw to it that the Russian posts which existed in the region were not warned. He had seized the *St. Peter and St. Paul*, a ship which he claimed to be of 240 tons, but which was, according to Barlow, only a fir-wood sloop of 50 feet in length, 16 in breadth, and of not more than 80 tons.

He took a cargo of furs, money from the public coffers, and clothes belonging to Russian officers. It was no doubt thanks to these bold loans that when he landed on the Île de France, he appeared dressed in a brilliant uniform and decorated with several cords. He set sail on 12 May 1771 to the sound of cannon fire. He had, he told Desroches, 83 companions, according to the *Memoirs* 96, of whom 75 were capable of service, according to the letter he wrote to Macao, 85. Stepanov counted a total of 70 people, including 9 sailors, 8 exiles or slaves, 1 pilot, 2 Russian children, 2 daughters of the pilot Csurin and 4 married women. Among the women, the baron includes the fabulous Aphanasia, whom the death of her father could not detach from her lover. The pilot seems to have followed Benyowszky willingly, as well as the women: but it is certain that the sailors and other Russians, such as Soudeikine and Ryoumin, were taken away by force. This explains the revolts and conspiracies that Benyowszky relates with his usual exaggerations, the discontent that Stepanov mentions, the abandonment of part of the crew on one of the Kurils. Indeed, the fugitives first headed for this archipelago. On one of the islands they met a band of exiles led by a certain Ochotin, who asked the baron to help him attack Okhotsk. The baron refused and set sail again, heading north. On 5 June, according to his estimate, he was 14 leagues from Cape Tsukoskoy; he soon dropped to the bottom of a bay he called Alacsima, in which he claimed to recognise the Alaskan peninsula. On 29 June, water began to run out and the crew had to be rationed. On 16 July, at 32°47' north latitude and 355° longitude of Bolsha, he landed on an island where he found wild pigs, orange trees and ore that his companions took for gold. He tells us that they wanted to exploit this mine, and that they forced their leader to take the ship to Japan in search of cattle and women and to return to found a colony;

they would have weighed anchor on 22 July and reached an island in Japan on the 28th. This whole account is difficult to accept. The Baron himself, in the account of his voyage which he published in the *Île de France*, states that he met Ochotin in one of the Aleutian Islands, that he touched the island of Aladar on 2 June, in which we must recognise the island of Anadyr, and that, having left on 9 June, he discovered an island on the 20th, which he called Urumsir, in latitude $53^{\circ}45'$ and longitude $15^{\circ}38'$ of Kamchatka; From there, returning south-west, he finally landed on 15 July on an uninhabited island, with a delightful climate, situated in latitude 32° and longitude 354° of Kamchatka, to which he gave the name of Liquor; he left it on 22 July and arrived on 28 July in a port in Japan, which he called Kilingur. From these partly irreconcilable testimonies of the same man, it seems that we must retain only this: the ship which carried Benyowszky and his more or less voluntary companions touched one of the Kuril Islands, it is difficult to determine which one; there is one which bears the name of Paramushir, which may have provided the name Urumsir. This Ismailov, whom Captain Cook's officers met in Kamchatka, simply said that he had been landed with some others on the Kuril Islands; that from this island the ship carrying them had passed within sight of Japan. This is much more likely and is confirmed by the testimony of several men who returned to Russia from France and who, when questioned by the English at Petropaulovsky in 1779, gave them an account that was absolutely consistent with that of Ismailov.

Benyowszky may have borrowed the notions, which are not very precise, that he gives about this part of his voyage from the Russian officers and sailors who had sailed in the Behring Sea, some of whom perhaps accompanied him. As for Ippolit Stepanov's unfortunately too brief account, it states that they landed in a small port on the Kuril Islands on 18 May, six days after their departure, and that they remained there until 12 June, busy preparing biscuits and bread.

Ryoumin agrees with Stepanov; he tells us that Benyowszky had Ismailov and several other sailors whipped for plotting to return to Siberia. He abandoned them on this island, as well as the wife of one of them, when he left. Having set out again on the 12th of June, with a wind which pushed them towards the south-west, after a fairly long journey, as they were, according to their calculations, at the height of the Mariana Islands, the water began to run out and the crew became restless and discontented; it was therefore necessary to change direction and attempt to return to China or Japan. A terrible storm from the south-west, which lasted four days, almost swallowed them up several times, but pushed them as far as the Japanese islands towards the 33rd degree of north latitude; the Baron's *Memoirs do* not mention this storm; it is however mentioned in the letter in bad French which he wrote to Macao: he also names *Mariain* Island there. From all this it can be seen that after touching one of the Kurils, the *Saint-Peter-and-Saint-Paul* had to be carried quite far south-westwards and changed course almost at right angles to reach the area around Japan. It is now easier to follow the progress of the navigators. Having reached land on the 7th of July, according to Ryoumin, the baron thought he was not far from Nangasaki; he flew the green flag, because he thought it was right to call himself and his people Dutch. That same evening, the ship came close to the coast, and anchor was dropped in 40 fathoms of water near a place where many lights could be seen shining. The next morning, before dawn, Stepanov embarked with Major Wymblath and eight men in a longboat to seek a safe anchorage and fresh water. But it was impossible for them to land without being seen, because of the glare of the fires. The natives, who appeared to be Japanese, soon gathered around them. Stepanov and his party, having given themselves out to be Dutch, were signalled to follow the coast to the north;

The Japanese began to examine the weapons and clothing of the foreigners, who gave them gifts of shirts, ribbons and cloth. However, the crowd was becoming too great; Stepanov saw fit to return to the ship, leaving six of his men behind. They received provisions of rice and water from the inhabitants, which were brought on board, after which the anchor was weighed, and the ship sailed northwards along the coast of several islands to find a convenient harbour. In the evening of the same day a crowd of small boats appeared, which led the Russians into a bay and even helped them to tow their vessel. The Russians took water and provisions from there, and spent the night quite peacefully; but the next morning, as Benyowszky was going ashore, he met boats mounted by armed Japanese; these people made him understand, by signs, that he must give up his project; otherwise it would cost him his head: he had to return to his ship. It was then very difficult for him to obtain the food and water he needed from the natives; this obliged him to set sail again, heading south-west. He seems to have used the map of Japan drawn up by Bellin in 1735 when he wrote his *Memoirs*; indeed, most of the names he mentions can be found there, the islands Ximo and Xicaco, today Kiou-Sou and Sikok, the island Takasima, today Tanega-Sima, the islands Toza and Bongo, which the baron calls Tonza and Bonzo, and the point of Misaqui, which he calls a port. The port named Nambu by Bellin is probably Benyowszky's Namgu; similarly, the group of islands of Matsima or Schiltpadi must have provided the elements of a strange name, Usilpatchar. It is probable that the *Saint-Peter-et-Paul* followed the long chain of the Japanese archipelago southwards, successively touching the Méaco islands, today Miaco-Sima, one of the Lioukiou islands which the baron calls Usma, Usmai Ligon, Stepanov Usmaki, and Ryoumin Usmaïtsi.

They stayed there for several days, took water and food and left, according to Ryoumin, on 31 July, still sailing south in the hope of reaching the Philippines. They arrived in Formosa on 7 August; it seems that they landed at the port of Tamsui, which Benyowszky calls Tanasoa. The inhabitants welcomed them at first, and let them draw water; but, the next day, as they wanted to take some more, three of the Russians, who had gone to bathe in a small stream near the fresh water supply, were killed by the natives and three others wounded. The day after, August 20, by order of Benyowszky, Stepanov landed with 33 armed men to avenge them: 3,000 or 4,000 natives came to meet them; but the Russians, divided into three groups, killed a large number of the assailants, dispersed the others, and in pursuit burned a thousand huts. This is Stepanov's account, confirmed by Ryoumin. This scuffle is told less simply by the baron in the *Memoirs*; the unexpected attack of a band of natives, the raid and the small fight that followed, are transformed into a great military expedition made at the request of a prince of the country with whom the Europeans contract a formal alliance. Let us take for what they are worth the embellishments that the author, after fifteen years, added to his Formosa adventure. It is even more difficult to believe that the inhabitants of this country offered to name him their king, that they recognised him as the warrior whose coming was predicted by the prophets and who would deliver Formosa from the yoke of the Chinese. We shall find more or less the same tale later on; but the scene will take place in Madagascar. The truth is, that having sufficiently avenged the murder of his companions, he resumed his course on the 21st, and, passing near the Pescadores Islands, which he called Piscatori, he reached the coast of China in a straight line, where he landed on the 1st of September at the port of Tchentchéou, in the province of Fokien. Of the 80 or so people he had taken with him, only 62 were left when he arrived in Macau on 12 September.

Stépanov, it is true, states that out of 70 people, only the 3 sailors killed in Formosa had been lost. From Macao, where he was very well received by the Portuguese governor, the baron gave notice of his arrival to the Chevalier de Robien, director in Canton for the French East India Company; at the same time, he claimed the protection of the king and flew the French flag. The singular appearance of this small vessel, roughly built of fir, the distress of the crew of which only 8 men were fit, the interest aroused by the audacious navigator, who had been the first to travel the entire length of the Japanese archipelago, gave rise to a sort of competition between the European colonies of Canton. The Dutch and the English conceived the idea of luring the baron on their ships and proposed to bring him back to Europe with the intention of taking advantage of his discoveries; but the latter, graciously welcomed by the French and knowing the alliance that existed between his sovereign and Louis XV, does not seem to have lent himself to their proposal. During his stay in Canton, which lasted until 17 January 1772, he lost a fairly large number of his companions. Only 47 embarked with him on the two ships of the Company, the *Dauphin* and the *Laverdy*. Among those who died in Canton was the captain of the *Saint-Peter-and-Saint-Paul*, Csurin; Stepanov, after violent disputes with the baron, was imprisoned in Macao and eventually died of poverty in Batavia. The ship and what was left of her cargo of furs had been sold for 3,960 Dutch gulden. It is highly probable that Benyowszky kept the best part of the sum for himself; this is perhaps the cause of the discord that seems to have arisen between him and his companions. He had to appeal to the Portuguese authorities and it was then that he had Stepanov arrested, whom he accused of having wanted to murder him.

The fictitious fiancée, Aphanasia, also ceased to exist, and her role was over, since the novel was no longer being written:

the baron made her die, as he had given birth to her, with a simple stroke of the pen. It was perhaps even in Canton that he got the idea for the character. Among those who perished in that city was a young girl aged between 10 and 12, whom he had buried in the Catholic church. The English claimed that she was a young and beautiful woman, disguised as a priest, and whose sex was recognised when she was buried. This is a fable: but the baron has, in his *Memoirs*, developed it freely. It is this unknown person, who, under the name of Aphanasia, allegedly the daughter of Governor Nilov, plays in his account the sentimental role of a new Heloise, undoubtedly inferior to her predecessors.

Benyowszky thus embarked with most of his companions, and the voyage to the Île de France lasted about three months. According to Abbé Rochon, Captain Saint-Hilaire, who commanded the *Dauphin*, was soon worried by the attitude and savage ways of his passengers. Fearing a show of force on their part, he took care to win the good graces of the chief by paying him the greatest homage, in return for which the journey was made without untoward incident. However, there is no trace of any complaint made by the captain; moreover, the fear seemed to be rather unjustified. It would have been difficult to repeat the Bolsheretzki exploit on a French vessel; thirty or so poorly armed forbidding men would not have come to terms as easily with the 300 sailors of the *Dauphin* as with the few Cossacks of Nilov. The abbot probably took Saint-Hilaire's joke too seriously. Arriving on 6 March at Port-Louis, Benyowszky disembarked, surrounded by a large entourage, to go to the home of Chevalier Desroches, governor of the islands. "He was like an army general," says Rochon, "decorated with several orders, followed by a real staff, whose rich uniforms announced officers of a higher rank." It is probable, as we have seen, that these uniforms came from the looting of the fortress or the stores of the Russian government. He himself presented himself under the title of Regimental General of the Republic of Poland.

The Chevalier Desroches seems to have been seduced by the spirit and wit of his host: "He is," he wrote in France, "covered in wounds, some of which disfigure his body and make it difficult for him to walk ¹. Despite this, he has retained a great air of health and vigour; his face is pleasant and sparkling with wit; but he is even wiser and more reserved, speaking readily, but never dealing with things he does not want to explain and saying only what he wants to say. I believe him to be naturally proud and imperious; but when he has given his trust, he is of the greatest honesty. I have reason to believe that he has opened his whole soul to me, only because I am the King's man. Since he took this decision, he seems to have to do something for the Chevalier Desroches every day. He has touched on all the sciences, and the most foreign notions to his first state have often been useful to him in the events of his life."

The physical and moral portrait of Benyowszky comes out too flattered from the pencil of the Chevalier. That he had a pleasant and witty physiognomy, we cannot doubt; his portrait, after a miniature, appears at the head of the English edition of his *Memoirs*; it was put there by people who knew him personally. His mind sparkles even more in his writings than in his eyes, and never did the author push his imagination further. He undoubtedly grasped the weakness of the Chevalier Desroches from the outset and affected to show him a confidence which must have touched him. He told him things about himself, his past adventures and his future plans which were said only to him, the baron having doubtless forgotten them as soon as they were said, as happens to boasters who are not all born, as we know, under the sun of Gascony. There is, however, one trait whose accuracy one can only admire. Benyowszky only said what he wanted to say,

¹ Benyowszky himself said that he limped in the right leg, as a result of a war wound which made it four inches shorter than the other.

but for reasons which were neither the reserve of a diplomat nor the wisdom of a statesman. It seems that the journal he published in the island, a copy of which Rochon has kept for us, did not seem sufficiently explicit to the naval officers who were there at the time, many of whom could have been quite familiar with certain regions from which he came, from their travels in China and from expeditions made to the Philippine Islands around that time to bring back nutmeg and clove plants. He stated that he had arrived in the lands north of California. Objections were made to him which he could not resolve; he could not say what were the productions of the countries he had seen; seeing himself pressed, he pretended to want to keep his secret, and, when he was asked to indicate on a general map of the globe the route he had followed, he refused.

He re-embarked on 24 March on the same ship that had taken him to the Île de France and arrived in Lorient on 18 July 1773.

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CHAPTER II

French relations with the Malagasy in the 18th century. - The trade. - The establishment of the Count of Modave at Fort-Dauphin - 1722-1769 ¹.

Since the French had taken over from the Dutch in Mauritius, they had made a trade in Madagascar which was of great necessity to them. Having at the beginning of the establishment found very few resources on the spot, the colonists and the soldiers who came from Bourbon lived on biscuits and salted meat like the crews of the Company. There was little game in the forests of the island; it was mainly deer; but they were hunted down so relentlessly that they soon became rare and hunting had to be prohibited in order to preserve this reserve in case of blockade. So they went to Madagascar to get rice and oxen, and at the same time slaves. The latter were less valued as workers than the 'kaffirs' from Mozambique, but they were much cheaper, more docile and did not turn brown as easily. All the ships of the Company, on their arrival or departure, went there to take on board their supplies of fresh meat and salt products. At the same time, they traded on behalf of the colony. As early as 1732, i.e. during the government of Dumas, the Company even created a small establishment on Maroce Island,

1 * A. C. Fonds. – Île de France, C4, 1-18, Madagascar ; C5, 1,2. – Pouget de Saint André, *La colonisation française à Madagascar sous Louis XV*.

At the same time, they explored the island of Sainte-Marie, where it was believed that oxen could be raised; there, in 1736, Captain Boisnoir de Lesquelen, who intended to form a herd and acclimatise various vegetables, probably stayed. In 1737, he was sent supplies and tools from France, but it is not known what became of this enterprise, which is not mentioned after that date. At that time, the vessels passing through the islands went to trade in various places, some to Mazay or Mazangaye, in the bay of Bombetok, which depended on a chief residing in Marovoay; others went to Mangahelly and to Fort-Dauphin. At the same time, small ships regularly made the trip to Rodrigue Island to bring back sea and land turtles, which were extremely numerous there.

In the year 1739, a catastrophe occurred: the frigate *La Légère* had been sent to Antongil Bay; a ship of the Company, the *Duc d'Anjou*, having gone later to the same area, met her at the entrance to the bay without ballast and completely disabled. The captain said that he had sent some of his crew in the boat to take water; he himself, with the first mate, had gone to a bay near the inlet for his trade. Suddenly, the natives, throwing themselves on the sailors who were busy carrying the barrels, killed 17 of them; the captain and the lieutenant barely had time, at the sound of the fight, to get back into their boat and return to the ship. However, many pirogues ¹ had already surrounded the ship, under the pretext of trade; taking advantage of the confidence of the French, who were very few in number, the blacks boarded the ship and killed the second lieutenant Hamon. They would have taken the ship, but for the intrepidity of Ensign d'Hérancé; he seized a rifle, shot several blacks and caused the others such a fright that they rushed into their dugouts and fled.

1 Small native canoe, carved from a single tree-trunk

Captain Gautier, having lost two thirds of his crew, had only been able to sail into the bay while waiting for help. The *Duc d'Anjou* provided him with makeshift equipment and men to go to the Indies and repair his ship. It does not seem that this attack was avenged; relations continued with the various ports of the eastern coast of Madagascar, although the bay of Antongil was avoided from then on.

However, in 1746, the fleet that La Bourdonnais was leading to the Indies was surprised by a cyclone off Madagascar and came to repair itself on the island of Maroce, where it stayed for six weeks. But the ships went instead to Fort-Dauphin or Foulepointe, from where they brought back slaves, oxen and rice as usual. In October 1747, there were three ships in the latter harbour at the same time; in June 1748, there were four, but one of them, the *Aimable*, returned to the Île de France completely disabled by a hurricane: it had had to throw its entire cargo of 350 oxen and 140,000 kg of rice into the sea. In October of the same year, the flûte ¹ *the Cupidon* was kidnapped by 7 lascars who took it to the bay of Antongil; there, the blacks seized the ship and massacred the lascars.

In order to avoid the loss of time for the ships which had to pass through the Indies with the monsoon and the loss of men caused by a too long stay on unhealthy coasts, the governors of the islands again thought of founding a permanent establishment there. In 1749, M. Vignol, an infantry officer, and M. Reynaud, chief engineer in Bourbon, proposed to create a station on Sainte-Marie Island, where they believed the trade would be done more easily and safely than elsewhere. Until 1721, there had been pirates of various nations there, whose privateer ships were then destroyed by the regular navies. Vignol and Reynaud asked for 100 troops and 100 workers,

1 A 'flûte' is a three-masted supply ship, also known as 'fluyt'

The governor of the islands, David, entered into relations with the chief of Foulepointe, named Tansimalo, and gave the order to a merchant of the Company, M. Gosse, who had been sent to this place to look after the supply of the ships the *Peace* and the *Mars*, to conclude a treaty for the acquisition of the island Sainte-Marie, where one wanted to install a guard house and some stores. The intention was to make the Grande Île "our mother of cattle", to supply the Indian ships with fresh meat and poultry and to trade rice. Gosse received, with his instructions, a draft treaty to be adopted by the natives. Tansimalo had died in the meantime; but the cession was agreed to by his daughter, Queen Beti; for this purpose, she was transported to Sainte-Marie by the *Mars* and, on 30 July 1750, she solemnly ceded to His Majesty Louis XV, represented on the occasion by Gosse, the island of Sainte-Marie in full ownership, in return for "a certain quantity of her own effects, of which she was satisfied". On the copy of the convention was affixed the sign of Beti, next to which was the imprint of her seal, which was a gold sequin, and those of her mother and the chiefs of her kingdom. But it seems that the honour and undoubtedly the profits of this negotiation should have belonged to Tansimalo's mother. Either she wanted to take revenge for having been left out, or the chiefs of the Grande Terre were jealous of the trade that the chiefs of the seaside were now doing all year round with the French, or Gosse had committed the fault of violating Tansimalo's tomb, as was rumoured, the natives rose up in November 1750 and massacred the unfortunate merchant and 14 of his companions. On hearing the news of this attack, David sent three ships from France to Sainte-Marie to take revenge. Having dropped anchor in front of the island, the crews disembarked and set fire to some villages; several pirogues, loaded with islanders, which were fleeing towards Grande Terre, were pursued by the boats and sunk by the artillery. The mother of Tansimalo died, the queen Beti was taken and taken to the Île de France.

Some time later, with the intention of re-establishing trade, which had completely ceased at Foulepointe as a result of this conflict, she was set free and sent back to the chief Dian-Haré, her brother, who commanded a part of the coast. With her went to Madagascar a certain La Bigorne, a former soldier of the Company, who was raised to the dignity of favourite. However, in 1753, Captain de Lozier-Bouvet, David's successor, reoccupied the small island of La Caye, separated from Sainte-Marie Island by a simple canal. The officers of the frigate *La Colombe* flew the white flag there and fixed a sign to a post stating that they had taken possession. In 1754, there was a garrison of 40 soldiers commanded by two officers. They held a small earthen fortification equipped with 4 cannons and lived in huts built in the local style. After a year, the palisades having rotted away, a second octagonal fort was built, armed with 8 cannons, a wooden house 24 feet long, raised on a stone base and covered with shingles sent from the Île de France. Bouvet had hesitated at first to resettle at Sainte-Marie itself; he did so in 1754, because he feared that he would be outdone by the English who, in 1751, during the passage of Boscawen's squadron, after the peace of Aix-la-Chapelle, had distributed flags to the chiefs of the country. He therefore sent the sloop *Villeflix* there to provide patrol service and built a 92-foot-long ship. But the enterprise turned out badly; the climate of the island was very unhealthy; in 1756, a third of the garrison had died; two ships which had gone there in February to get supplies, the *Auguste* and the *Colombe*, had lost almost all their officers and sailors in May.

Governor Magon, Lozier-Bouvet's successor, found the establishment useless and difficult to defend. He said, "We lost many people there, whereas we could have been satisfied with going there in the summer, as we continued to do at Fort-Dauphin and Foulepointe, to have food, oxen and slaves."

In fact, during the years 1756 and 1757, the many ships that passed through, coming from France or the Indies, finding no more food in the islands, were obliged to go to Madagascar to make salt for their journey. The *Neptune*, the *Silhouette*, the *Gange*, the *Maurepas*, the *Achille* went there from May to July 1756. The *Favori*, the *Béthune*, the *Phéliepeaux* stayed there at the beginning of 1757; but the *Achille* lost 61 men at Sainte-Marie, and in the first six months of 1757, 27 soldiers, 37 sailors, 16 lascars, 2 employees and 2 officers perished in this same post, without counting 19 sailors from a ship wrecked at Foulepointe. On 9 April 1757, a terrible hurricane, accompanied by an earthquake, ruined the establishment from top to bottom and it was then abandoned. The trade was mainly carried out at Foulepointe, where Magon had sent a chief trader named Gaillard in December 1756. There was a great palaver, in the presence of M. Poivre and through the intermediary of this La Bigorne, who has already been mentioned, now a simple interpreter; he was chief trader in 1758 and relations were maintained without serious difficulties from 1758 to 1762. During these four years, the only food on the Île de France was rice, oxen from Madagascar and turtles which were fetched from Rodrigue Island. Even, in 1759, the entire squadron of the Count of Aché spent a whole season at Foulepointe.

Unfortunately, it was not only food that was sought on Grande-Île, but above all slaves. The Company's ships loaded many slaves on behalf of the planters; but for every 100 that were landed with the knowledge of the agents and after payment of the expenses, 1,500 were landed in secret, for the sole benefit of the officers and planters, while the Company had all the expenses of the voyage to itself. These were the games of plunderers.

But in 1762, the area around Foulepointe was completely ruined by the continuous wars waged by the slave traders.

La Bigorne, always powerful in the country, took sides in these struggles for some of the enemy chiefs of Dian-Haré, who was defeated and withdrew to Antongil Bay. Trade ceased and the French ships which came to seek refreshment in these regions were forced to return to the Île de France in the most deplorable state. The captains complained; La Bigorne was recalled. He had undoubtedly earned some money during the troubles, for on his return he bought a dwelling on the Rivière des Créoles for the price of 30,500 livres. This character only returned to Madagascar in 1767, after the death of Dian-Haré, who was then replaced by his son Hiavy.

After the peace of Paris in 1763, the ruined Compagnie des Indes handed over the islands of France and Bourbon to the king. According to the census taken that year, there were 348 inhabitants or planters, 3,971 Negroes, 2,817 Negroes, 1,170 Negroes, 812 Negroes and 3,546 oxen on the Île de France. The Company maintained 80 employees, 149 workers, a number of soldiers, lascars and pawns on the island. In 1766, the king appointed new advisors and named Dumas, major-general [*maréchal de camp*], as governor general, to whom was added Poivre, commissioner general and intendant. The latter deserves some attention: born in Lyon in 1719, after studying theology and natural sciences, he joined the Foreign Missions Society. He went to China in 1741 and stopped in Cochinchina; but the climate having become unbearable for him, he had to leave for France after two years. The ship which carried him was surprised in the Strait of Banca by Commodore Bernet's squadron: in the ensuing fight, Poivre had his right arm blown off. He recovered from his wound, stayed in Batavia, managed to reach Pondicherry and from there went to the islands. He proposed to Governor David to take some clove and nutmeg plants to acclimatise them in Mauritius.

Not having been able to obtain the necessary funds for this undertaking, he returned to France on the La Bourdonnais squadron in 1747 and presented his project to the King's commissioner to the Company, M. Rouillé, who encouraged him to carry it out himself. Poivre therefore left in October 1748. He was to go to CochinChina to establish a French factory in Taifao; from there he would go to Manila and bring back spice plants for the Île de France. In case of success, he was promised a bonus of 30,000 livres and a pension of 1,200 livres. It does not appear that he went to CochinChina, because, according to his letters to the directors of the Company, he was in Manila in 1749 as a trader on his own account: He tried to obtain plants and sent small boats to the archipelago which, under the pretext of making a race, were supposed to provide him with what he was looking for; but the secret of his mission had been divulged; the Spaniards put a stop to it, and when he returned to the Île de France in 1753, he brought back only 5 small musk-trees in good condition out of the 32 he had been able to take away. He left the following year and stayed several months in Manila, Timor and other islands; he brought back nutmegs and cloves; but M. Aublet, apothecary and botanist in Port Louis, declared that they were quite different plants, simple areca nuts. Poivre showed the most violent indignation against this audacious contradiction; but the latter, far from denying himself, dared to claim that the nuts presented by the traveller as being in full germination had been taken from nutmeg jam. He maintained that a nutmeg, carefully planted at the very bottom of a tub, had been examined, and found to be nothing but a stone; that in another tub, a taproot, which appeared to come out of a nut, was ingeniously pricked into it; that, in a third, a nutmeg had indeed been found, but cut in two: the two halves surrounded a very lively seedling, but quite alien to the fruit. All the plants brought in that year, whether legitimate or not, perished and four years later,

Aublet still mocked Poivre's memorable failure without mercy: he had undoubtedly been fooled by the Tagals. He returned to France in 1758 and claimed compensation from the Compagnie des Indes for his troubles, although he recognised that they had been in vain. Having become general commissioner of the islands, he carried out his plan. In May 1769, he sent out the corvette *Vigilante*, commanded by Lieutenant Trémigon, and the both l'*Étoile du matin*, commanded by M. d'Etchevery, a frigate's lieutenant, who had with him the Sieur Provost. The two ships passed through Mindanao, Yolo, then separated to try, by skirting the numerous islands of the archipelago, to obtain these seeds and plants so jealously guarded; they ended up buying from two small chiefs of Ceram 400 nutmeg trees, 70 clove trees, 1,000 nutmegs and a case of germinated clove berries. A second expedition by Provost with two other ships in 1771 and 1772 was also successful; the plants were distributed between Bourbon, the Île de France and Cayenne and were perfectly successful there.

Poivre had found the islands in the saddest situation. The war, the presence of the squadrons, the cessation of trade had ruined the inhabitants. He began by addressing them a speech full of wise thoughts, full of philosophical uncton, but better suited, no doubt, for peaceful provincial academics than for slave traders and privateers. But he does not seem to have found in Governor Dumas a man capable of understanding him; he was not satisfied with his lot either; he complained of being in misery because of the high cost of everything. Although he had a salary of 24,000 livres a year, he asked the minister, in groaning letters, to provide him with bread. In a confidential letter to the Duc de Praslin, he accused Dumas of having populated his house with slaves and oxen bought with the king's effects.

He assured us that Dumas had neither decency nor delicacy of feeling, that he had lost his reputation, and that he was overwhelmed by the contempt of the colony and, to complete his decried, Poivre added that to have known Lally ¹ was to know Dumas.

However, a royal decree having made the trade in Madagascar free, Dumas claimed to reserve the traffic on the eastern coast for the king, despite the protests of a number of inhabitants. This was, he said, to prevent the price of slaves from rising, to prevent private individuals from transporting them to the Cape, where the Dutch were paying a high price. The governor had to be persuaded to do so, and he declared himself ready to answer for his actions on his own head. Trade resumed with the Grande-Île, except for this restriction. In August 1767, a chief trader named Glemet was sent to Fort-Dauphin for no other purpose than to obtain supplies, which were absolutely lacking. We have some information on the way this trade was conducted at that time: the clerks themselves fixed the price of oxen and rice; a fat ox was paid for one rifle; for two rifles, there were three average ones; a heifer and a bull were worth only one rifle. The animals, once bought, were loaded on the flûte the *Garonne*, which made a regular service between Fort-Dauphin and the Île de France and which took about a month to make this journey. They were parked on the deck and a supply of banana trunks was taken on board to feed them. It is not surprising that, under these conditions, half of them were lost; but even more were sacrificed during the embarkation, so poorly were they managed. The herds were brought to the seaside; there were, as you can imagine, no quays or barges, but they had to be brought to the ship, which was anchored outside the bar. A rope was therefore tied to the horns of the oxen, and they were forced to swim by hauling them behind a boat: in this way they were made to cross, willingly or unwillingly, the three large waves that formed the bar.

¹ Thomas Arthur, Comte de Lally – a French general who was defeated by the British in India in 1760, and was later executed in disgrace.

The unfortunate animals were knocked down, rolled over and often drowned by the waves; those which arrived alive at the ship were hoisted up by the horns: "This," says a witness, "did not do them harm." Poivre, who was imbued with the commercial doctrines in vogue at the time, recommended above all that purchases not be paid for in money, that neither tallow nor hides be lost, and also that they not be stolen. In addition, he wanted to be informed of everything that could affect the state of the country and the inhabitants; he was even concerned about the ruins of the old French fort. It does not appear that on this last point he was satisfied, but he was sent slaves which he did not ask for, unless it was a real opportunity for the price. We have the current price of this kind of commodity. A woman of about 30 years of age could buy two rifles worth 10 francs each, 10 pounds of gunpowder at one sol per pound, and a bottle of brandy; but a man of 24 years of age was worth an average of 4 rifles, a fathom of cloth, a mirror and two bottles of brandy.

Poivre promised himself a great success of the trade he was reorganizing, if one refers to the quantity of exchange goods he requested in France for the year 1768. He needed 10,000 Charleville rifles, 100 tons [*milliers*] of powder, 120 tons of lead, 24,000 dozen Flemish knives, 10,000 small mirrors at 9 francs a dozen, 300,000 flints, 220,000 sewing needles, 4,000 needle cases, 1,500 pairs of scissors, 60 barrels of brandy and cognac at 60 litres a barrel. But he was deceived in his expectations. The *Garonne* made three voyages and brought back only 376 oxen and 17 slaves bought on behalf of Dumas and the captain. Poivre still had to ask for grain and salt products from France as usual and had to make trips to Rodrigue, from where 5,065 land and sea turtles were taken that year.

The State, which fed 4,500 people, spent 434,484 livres on bread and wine alone in 1768. It was also the state that bought the crops.

As for the cattle brought to Madagascar, the oxen were delivered to the butchery, the heifers and bulls were distributed to the inhabitants on the condition that for every 10 heifers and 1 bull once provided, they would return to the king one ox in the fourth year and two oxen per year in the following years.

Unfortunately, illegal trading ¹ was an almost inevitable scourge. Everyone was working on it, the governor, officers of the legion, ship's officers, sailors and inhabitants. On an imperative request from Dumas, Poivre had to send Sieur Glemet, chief trader at Fort-Dauphin, to establish a second post at Foulepointe: Sieur Valgny was left at Fort-Dauphin. The real reason for this measure was that there were many more slaves at Foulepointe than at Fort-Dauphin; smuggling was then carried out with impudent audacity. In December 1768, the *Garonne* smuggled 200 slaves into the fort and into the battery on Île-aux-Tonneliers. The harbour master, the officers of the garrison, Dumas himself, according to Poivre, were interested. Poivre, warned by an honest agent, had the fort explored.

The soldiers made it so difficult for almost all the slaves to escape the search. Only 70 were found.

When Dumas had left the island at the end of 1768, Poivre wanted to have the chief trader Glemet arrested. But when the order arrived at Foulepointe, in the first days of January 1769, Glemet was dead and with him almost all the soldiers who formed the guard of the post. His papers were seized and showed his misappropriations. Officers and inhabitants asked him repeatedly for *ebony balls*. A certain Desveaux confessed to having received 44 negroes in two trips on the king's ships. The harbour master, Mervin, took charge of the landings himself. Glemet's invoices proved that the negroes destined for private individuals were paid with the effects belonging to the king. Dumas himself had written letters to his dear Glemet in which he abused Poivre;

1 French: 'la pacotille'

these letters were lying around randomly with those of Filet (known as la Bigorne) and the fantastic accounts of the chief trader. There was no prosecution.

Thus, until 1768, the French considered Madagascar as a stopover for supplies, as a slave market. The establishments that were made there had no other purpose than to ensure the security of the traders and to maintain a certain trade with the natives to supply the factories. The trade, except during the last two years, was the monopoly of the Compagnie des Indes, and private vessels could only deal in it by fraud. The loss of men and the costs incurred by these relations were usually charged to the accounts of the islands of France and Bourbon or to the individual accounts of the Company's ships which had taken part in their passage. For these voyages, as for the one to the Indies, traditions had been created and junk was as regularly practised as a professional duty. The administrative scruples of a philosophic intendant such as Poivre, his efforts at surveillance, his complaints to the minister against the universal conspiracy of the illegal traders must have seemed to the latter to be the effect of a naturally chagrined character rather than of a virtuous disposition: an abuse which becomes a custom takes on in the eyes of those who benefit from it the legitimacy of a right. To pay with the guns, glassware, mirrors and scissors of the king or the Company for slaves that one should have paid with one's own funds was not called stealing: the governor, the inhabitants, the sailors, corrupted by an almost unconscious perversion, plundered this anonymous treasure as nowadays one plunders that of the State. From time immemorial, some people have professed that one owes probity only to individuals.

Only after 1768 were new attempts made to revive the tradition begun in the previous century by Flacourt.

For the first time since 1672, there was talk of exploring the interior of the island, exploiting its riches, setting up settlers, crops and industries on this soil which until then had only been required to produce rice, oxen and slaves. The honour of having conceived, as Colbert did and as contemporaries do, the taking of possession of Madagascar, the ambition of founding there the principal and richest of our colonies in the Indian Ocean belongs to the Count of Modave. He was an officer who had been fighting in India since 1756. He had married the daughter of the governor of Karaikal, Porcher de Soulches. After the capture of Pondicherry, he had led the resistance of the rajahs of Madure against the troops of General Lawrence; but the end of the war obliged him to leave India and to withdraw to the islands where most of the former employees of the Company, expelled from Decca, were refugees. On his arrival, he bought 56 houses or plantations and 400 blacks; but he was not in a position to pay for everything in cash, and the speculation may seem all the more daring, as nothing in his career up to then had prepared him for these new occupations. It seems that he had already made a voyage to Madagascar, most probably on one of the small vessels which went there for the trade. However, he only knew Fort-Dauphin and had only the vaguest notions about the interior of the country. He had read the report of Flacourt, whose testimony he constantly invokes. In 1766, he was deputed to France by the inhabitants who were still unaware of the decisions taken by the Duc de Praslin concerning the administration of the islands; however, he had, as he himself says, "the honour of being known and even loved by the Duc". Bold and adventurous, as his entire life proves, he had no doubt already conceived his colonisation projects; perhaps he was only sent to France to have them approved.

He arrived in Paris in June 1767, and from August to December he sent the minister several memoranda in which he set out his views:

"I flatter myself," he said, "that Monseigneur is intimately persuaded of the necessity of laying the foundations of a powerful establishment in Madagascar... Never has an enterprise been less costly to attempt and offered more advantages. The country is remarkably fertile, especially from the point of view of the cultivation of grain, which it would produce as advantageously and with as much variety in the species as any other land. The colony would itself provide for this essential part of its subsistence. It would also be in a position to export the quantity necessary to supply the Île de France and our trading posts in India. Our ships would find in its ports the flour and biscuits they would need. Herds of all kinds multiply easily, almost without care... This multiplication would be the object of a very great trade... The salting process is very successful there. The sale of hides and tallow would further increase the product of this trade. Hemp grows naturally everywhere...; we could therefore manufacture all kinds of cordage and all kinds of cloth, an object of immense consumption for the sole supply of the Indian navy, where ropes and sailcloth are so expensive. Sugar cane, cotton, indigo, silk and wax are found in abundance in the country. These riches are mostly lost: it will be up to the colonists to make use of them.

"One of the first things that should be done is to build some forges. The costs would be lower than anywhere else. Iron is found here in the greatest abundance and of the best quality... I do not know enough about the mineral kingdom of this island to enter into a long enumeration on this subject. However, it is known, without a doubt, that there are gold mines in the vicinity of Fort-Dauphin. I was shown a mountain from which the Portuguese once extracted gold.

"What is most urgent is to bring to Madagascar workers and craftsmen of all kinds. It is not necessary for the king to take them into his service...

There will be many of them for the Île de France and the resources of work and fortune being without comparison more abundant in Madagascar, they will go there willingly. We will soon be able to replace the French sailors with Negroes from the island, who have enough inclination for navigation and who will offer themselves in droves to serve on our ships, when they have the assurance of being well treated and of returning to their country. I predict that within five years the establishment of Madagascar will consume ten cargoes or 8,000 tons of goods from the kingdom, which it will pay for with the industry of the Malagasy... Never has a project cost less to attempt. There is no need for extraordinary means or funds. *Everything must be carried out from the Île de France.* It is only a slight displacement. I propose to leave by the first ships. I will be in the Île de France in April and in Madagascar in July. When the first notices of my arrival are received in France, the establishment will be formed, the Fort-Dauphin cleaned and occupied, and houses built. I have heard that the late Maréchal de Saxe had this idea for himself. I conceived it for my country... The success of this project will illustrate the ministry of the Duc de Praslin to the most remote posterity... It will repair all our losses in Asia and America, assure at the same time our trade of the Indies and put us in a position to take one day the most terrible and complete revenge of our enemies."

It seems that Modave put some complacency into these descriptions, obviously intended to seduce the imagination of the Duc de Praslin. Nothing was less demonstrated than the abundance of iron in Madagascar; what can be said of its excellence? The harvests that Modave already saw transformed into biscuits, the natural hemp from which he made ropes, from which he supplied the entire fleets of India, the indigo, the wax, the silk, the cotton, were somewhat of the same nature as the conquests of King Picrochole. ¹ Before so much wealth could emerge from the ground where it was still slumbering, how many days, how much labour, how many deaths of men had to occur for which the enthusiastic dream-maker had neither the account nor the care!

1 A fictional character – a bad king, and instigator of futile wars – created by Rabelais

He should, however, have known the insalubrity of the shores: the slave trade devoured enough human lives every year that the project of setting up a colony of workers and peasant farmers in these climes should not have been so easily accepted by a man who knew the islands and knew how little work the whites provide there.

It should be noted, in passing, that the views suggested by Modave to the minister, with so little criticism, are like the prototype of the completely misleading descriptions we shall find in Benyowszky's correspondence. The Hungarian adventurer may have had knowledge of Modave's papers, so methodically does he seem to amplify his ideas and predictions.

We shall soon find these iron or gold mines, these innumerable herds of oxen, these wheat harvests and even these Madeira sailors, the future reserve of our crews. But the Hungarian gives as real what his inspirer saw only in the distant future and as a disappointing mirage. Modave asked that a small church be built, a house for the governor, an arms room, a gunpowder magazine, two stores for trading goods, a barracks, two pavilions to house the officers, a hospital and a prison. He claimed to have done in the Île de France, with his black workers, works as varied and as important as those he proposed. The staff of the future colony was to be considerable. He wanted to have 4 companies of infantry, 25 workers, 8 cannons, 6 mortars: in addition, he would have the staff of doctors and nurses necessary for the service of the hospital.

The minister only agreed that the governor and intendant of the Île de France would provide soldiers and supplies for the early stages of the settlement, which was to resemble those that had already been tried there. Modave's mission was to explore the country;

they did not want to send settlers or incur great expenses before a stay of a few years and a perfect knowledge of the region had confirmed his enthusiastic assessments: "I am taking along," he wrote, "about twenty people, of whom I will employ the most enlightened to search and reconnoitre the country." He wanted to push his research up to 80 leagues to the north, to enter into relations with the native chiefs and to attract them to our alliance.

On 5 September 1768, he landed at Fort-Dauphin. Well received by the small chiefs of the region who had known the French traders for a long time, he was ceded a territory of about ten square leagues on the shore by them. One of his companions, M. de la Marche, advanced into the interior and likewise acquired a territory on the banks of the Mananpani River three leagues from the sea. Modave planned the creation of four other posts, where he would distribute the colonists he intended to receive from France. He had no doubt that he would soon dominate the whole island, provided he was supported by the government. Unfortunately, accidents occurred which he does not seem to have foreseen. La Marche and several soldiers who had accompanied him died of malaria fever. The epidemic claimed another ten victims at Fort-Dauphin itself, whose healthiness Modave praised. On this date (11 December 1768), he urged M. de Praslin to form a special corps of 300 foot soldiers and 50 dragoons for Madagascar. At the same time he asked for 800 colonists and workers. But, on the other hand, Intendant Poivre, by the ships of January 1769, wrote to France to complain about his table expenses and his lack of order. The trade at Fort-Dauphin had been unfavourable and Poivre was very uncertain about the future results of the establishment. At this time, Dumas was replaced by the Chevalier Desroches and he seems not to have been favourable in principle to an enterprise which was starting badly.

It must be admitted that, prodigal of memoirs and promises, Modave seemed to take no action and did no business. On 30 August 1769, he wrote again to France, but to obtain the rank of brigadier, permission to acquire negroes with the king's goods and an increase in his salary. He demanded the artillery, soldiers, workers and colonists of which he had spoken the previous year. Desroches had allowed him without difficulty to bring slaves to the islands on ships at the king's expense, and he made such ample use of the permission that he felt he had to apologise: "Enclosed," he wrote to him, "is the list of blacks that I had embarked on the *Garonne* on my account. The number seems considerable to me, but I presume that the interest you deign to take in the recovery of my affairs will make you judge differently." He had therefore not interrupted the trade as has been wrongly said. On 2 September 1769, Desroches sent observations to France which were entirely unfavourable to the establishment of Fort Dauphin. It was all too easy for him to compare the wonders promised by Modave with the mediocrity of the results achieved. In one year, out of a strength of about 130 men, 21 had been lost. Very few oxen had been received, although Modave had proposed to prohibit trade in them in the south of the island, in order to form a herd more easily. Consequently, the minister ordered the evacuation of Fort-Dauphin and the small colony was relieved in October 1770.

Modave attributed his failure to Desroches' ill will; it would have been more accurate to seek the cause in his own exaggerations. Had he been given all he asked for in men and money, he would never have matched in reality the dreams he had conceived through reading Flacourt. "We received," said Desroches, "neither cotton, nor steel, nor gum, nor resin." And, certainly, none could have come in a year from a wild island, even if mines and virgin forests had been found there. Desroches would have been unjust if he had reproached the sterility of an enterprise that was not new to a leader who had assured nothing but a reasonably distant future;

It was perhaps less so in opposing Modave, who had promised too much for the present, with the null results of its first year of occupation. However, it is probable that with a little perseverance and by making the necessary expenditures, a lasting establishment could have been created at Fort-Dauphin, whose situation is not too unhealthy. But did the minister himself know what he wanted to do? While Modave proposed to create a settlement and exploitation colony, the people of the Île de France wanted a trading establishment. If one really wished to colonise, it is certain that it was better to first populate and exploit the Île de France itself. But the most absurd mistake was to make the Île de France pay the costs of this new installation, of this rival colony. In order to transform Madagascar according to Modave's ideas, it would have been necessary to assign it independent funds; the future empire should not have been subordinated to its modest neighbour, nor the new Cortez to Poivre's bureaucratic methods. But again, did the minister know what he wanted?

There was certainly nothing personal to Modave in Desroches' opposition to his plans. Poivre had at first seemed to approve of them; he changed his mind as soon as he appreciated the expenses in which his own fund was compromised. These two men, once the affair was over, worked with alacrity to obtain for the colonel all possible compensation. He had had to return the estates and slaves he had unwisely acquired in 1765 to the sellers because he had not been able to pay the price. In 1771, he asked for a pension: Desroches proposed him for the government of Kariakal; Poivre, at the same time, supporting the approach of his superior, asked that he be authorized to make advances to the count to help him rehabilitate his lands on the Île de France. After the fall of Choiseul, Modave, hoping that the new minister would be more favourable, sent him a memorandum in which he repeated the considerations already presented to the due de Praslin.

The engineer Charpentier de Cossigny took an interest in this project and sent a letter to the Comte de Boynes, in which he advised to take possession of Tamatave. Thus the affair had not been abandoned, but the location of Fort-Dauphin had seemed badly chosen. In these years 1771 and 1772, the difficulty and poverty of the trade, the poor resources of the Île de France, noted by Poivre's own reports, made it necessary for the minister to resolve this question definitively. We shall see how Benyowszky, finding himself there by chance, took advantage of the efforts made by others and was appointed to take over the attempts that had been made in vain for so long to settle in the large island.

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CHAPTER III

Benyowszky is sent to Madagascar. - Formation of the volunteer corps. - Instructions given by M. de Boynes that are not precise enough. - Views of Turgot. - Fantastic projects of Benyowszky ¹.

Benyowszky arrived in Lorient on 18 July 1772. Having gone ashore, he was politely received by the port commander, M. de la Vigne-Buisson, who, two days earlier, had learned from a letter from the captain of the *Laverdy*, of the arrival of a number of Hungarian and Polish soldiers.

M. de la Vigne-Buisson agreed to send a courier immediately to take the baron's letters to the Duc d'Aiguillon, Minister of Foreign Affairs. They were written in bad Latin. He asked to be allowed to go to the Court to communicate important secrets; he described himself as a vassal of His Apostolic Majesty, a Regimental of the Republic of Poland; he promised to reveal the content of a secret treaty between the Muscovites and the English. This unexpected news surprised the Duc d'Aiguillon; he immediately wrote to the Minister of the Navy, the Comte de Boynes, that the accommodation and maintenance of the refugees had to be assured until further notice. The latter therefore instructed the Governor of Brittany to establish them in Lorient and to put them in subsistence in the garrison, while waiting for the Minister of Foreign Affairs to send to Port-Louis the funds necessary for their upkeep, from the budget of his department.

1 * *Mémoires de Benyowszky*. – Fonds Madagascar, C5, 4, C5, 8.

A few days later, the Duc d'Aiguillon replied to Benyowszky himself and authorised him to go to Compiègne where he was then with the Court. It does not seem that they already had the intention of using him; they seemed prepared to repatriate him to Hungary, as they had repatriated most of his companions to Russia. Benyowszky says in his *Memoirs* that, having gone to Compiègne, he was received with distinction by the minister, and that the latter immediately offered him the command of a regiment. It is unlikely that things went so quickly. Benyowszky first received financial assistance; this enabled him to send a servant to his country, who brought Mme. Benyowszka and her sister, Mlle. Henska, to Versailles. He had found a relative in France, an old hussar from Berchiny, who commanded the town and castle of Bar-le-Duc for the king. He remained in Paris. However, the ministers wondered whether it was wise to dismiss a man who claimed to have acquired so much knowledge and so much importance in his journey. They seem to have feared that he would take it to other nations. Benyowszky claims that he proposed to conquer Formosa, where, as we have seen, he had spent some days. But it was considered that such a distant settlement would be beyond the limits of French commercial activity: this led, no doubt, to his being entrusted with the execution of the already old and still unfortunate plan for the development of Madagascar. It is quite improbable that he was, from the outset, presented with this undertaking as a very considerable one, that he was promised 1,200 troops, that he was charged with putting the whole island under the domination of the king; it is even more difficult to believe that he himself asked to reduce the number of his soldiers. It was towards the end of December 1772 that M. de Boynes drew up a report, the conclusions of which were approved by the king: in it he proposed the creation, under the name of Benyowszky's Volunteers, of a corps of light troops destined to serve on the Île de France:

it could be used to carry out the plan that has long been in place for the island of Madagascar.

After a series of errors and mistakes which the administration of the Île de France had not been able to prevent, the attempt made in 1768 to create a colony at Fort-Dauphin had failed because it was believed that a spirit of domination and conquest had been put into it. A much more modest object would be to civilise the inhabitants of the large island by good examples and the power of religion and to inspire them with needs, in order to open up an outlet for goods from France, in exchange for which one would have goods from Madagascar. The Baron de Benyowszky, having learned in the course of his travels the way to deal with savage peoples, seemed to have all the talents and especially the gentleness of character that were suitable for such a purpose. With regard to the point on the island of Madagascar where the establishment could be formed, it seemed that the choice should be left to the administrators of the Île de France, on which this establishment was to depend. However, they would indicate the bay of Antongil, in the east of Madagascar, because this part of the island had not yet been visited, and because it was hoped to be able to open up a road by land to the west coast from this bay, so as to ensure the submission of the north of the island.

This project was approved and at the same time the ordinance which prescribed the raising of a corps of volunteers on foot. It was to be divided into 3 companies, each composed of 1 forage officer, 4 sergeants, 8 corporals, 8 auxiliaries, 56 men and 2 drums; the staff and the cadres would be made up of the colonel, that was Benyowszky, 1 captain, acting as major, 3 company captains, 3 first lieutenants, 3 second lieutenants, 1 engineer geographer, 1 quartermaster and 1 standard bearer. The commander was to have 22 liv. 4 s. 5 d. ½ per day, that is per month 666 liv. 14 s. 1 d. and about 8,000 livres per year.

The clothing of the volunteers consisted of a jacket of ticking or nankin closed with green half-bavaroises, with small facings of the same colour and white buttons stamped with an anchor, a coat of green cloth, breeches of nankin and a hat edged with white. The troop was to enjoy all the privileges and advantages granted to the king's soldiers. On 1 April 1773, another decision raised the baron's salary to 12,000 livres per year. His commission, dated 30 December 1772, stated that he was appointed colonel commanding the corps of Volunteers, to command and operate it under the authority of the general and private commanders of the French colonies beyond the Cape of Good Hope. The staff did not seem to be badly composed: the lieutenant-colonel was Sieur Marin, former captain in the regiment of Canada, the major was Sieur de Marigny, captain of the dragoons of the legion of Conflans; among the lieutenants, Sieur Brice came from the royal grenadiers, another from the regiment of the Sarre. There were only 3 foreign officers; Sieurs Wymblad, Cromstovsky and Kovacz. The first remained in France having been struck down by paralysis; and the Minister of Foreign Affairs assured him of a retirement salary. Benyowszky took a surgeon who had left Kamchatka with him, the 79-year-old Sieur Meder. As for the soldiers, the minister claimed that they had been assembled with the greatest care and that they had been composed of strong, robust young men and workers of various trades, so that there would be no embarrassment for the various jobs that would have to be done. But it seems that this was not done with all the care required. Indeed, the navigator Kerguelen, who stayed in Madagascar for some time in 1774, states that the baron's troop was composed of rascals, vagabonds and scavengers from the Pont-Neuf. The corps was however formed, as it was, of 3 companies of 79 men each and 21 officers including the lieutenant-colonel. Among these volunteers, it seems that the Russians were not very numerous; most of them, in fact, returned to their country on board merchant ships on which they enlisted as sailors.

Ryoumin was repatriated by the embassy and they were all found a few years later in Kamchatka, which proves that they had left in spite of themselves.

In March 1773, Benyowszky was ordered to embark at Lorient on the ship *Marquise-de-Marboeuf*. Out of a total salary of 19,000 livres, of which 7,000 were paid by the Foreign Office, he left a delegation of 4,000 livres per year until 1775 to Sieur Boisroger who had advanced him the sums necessary for his equipment. He carried various effects and supplies weighing 35 tons. The ship set sail on 22 April 1773. The last instructions received by the baron from the minister were that he should form an establishment in Madagascar with a view to providing the Île de France with the help it needed: to inform him more exactly of His Majesty's wishes, the Comte de Boynes communicated to him the letter he had written jointly to the Chevalier de Ternay, governor of the islands, and to M. Maillart-Dumesle, intendant.

"You are aware," he said, "of the project that M. de Modave had adopted in 1767, to form a colony of Europeans in Madagascar, to civilize the inhabitants of this island, and accustom them to our customs and habits. It was not long before it became apparent that this establishment was based on false principles, and it was forced to be abandoned because of the impossibility of meeting the advances of all kinds that M. de Modave required for the new colonists. In spite of the little success of this attempt, one cannot hide the fact that the island of Madagascar contains very great resources, and that it would be useful to have an establishment there; But, instead of a colony, whose views would too openly injure the rights of property, to be received with pleasure by a pastoral and agricultural people, it should be a question of a simple post, by means of which useful connections could be formed with the principal chiefs of the country, a trade could be established with them, and the abuse of dealing in money could be stopped.

It will then be up to the intelligence of the person who will be in charge of this enterprise to extend his connections in the interior of the island, in order to open up new branches of trade, and, by behaving prudently, we can hope to arrive one day at the goal proposed by M. de Modave, and to form a colony all the more solid because it would be founded on the very interest of the islanders. The king allowed M. de Benyowszky the freedom to choose the place which seemed to him the most suitable for the establishment which he was charged to form. The only exception was Fort Dauphin, despite the healthiness of the air, because this part of the island was too arid and offered no resources for trade." The minister added that the port of Tamatave seemed to be the most suitable for the establishment, but that Benyowszky would judge for himself of its advantages and that, in the uncertainty of where he would settle, a small ship was placed at his disposal to enable him to explore the coasts of the island.

Intendant Maillart-Dumesle was also advised to add to Benyowszky's corps an administrative officer, a storekeeper, a treasurer and a chaplain. He was advised to provide the expedition with an assortment of trade goods, such as rifles, pistols, axes, nails, iron bars; he was also to give the treasurer sufficient funds for six months' pay and the storekeeper three months' worth of food. It would be forbidden to let private shipowners approach the point of the island where the baron would be fixed; the latter was to hold the hand to this ban with the greatest rigour. The minister sent by the same ship the effects of clothing, armament, equipment as well as the tents necessary for the formation of the corps of Volunteers which was to take place only in the Île de France; he announced the purchase of a brigantine of 90 tons intended for the service of the future colony.

The recruits were sent partly on the 'flûte' *l'Étoile*, partly on the *Marquise-de-Marboeuf*.

But M. de Boynes' orders were incomplete. Although Benyowszky appeared to be subordinate to the Governor of the Île de France, he retained the right to correspond directly with Paris, and the officials of the islands never felt authorized to give him orders. They were instructed to provide him with food and money for six months, but it was not said that he should continue to receive these supplies regularly. Was Benyowszky to rely on the budget of the Île de France while not being part of the administrative staff of this colony? Or was he to receive money, food and recruits directly from France, as he received them directly from orders?

These points were not specified in M. de Boynes' letter. The result was that the baron believed himself to be independent of the governor of the Île de France and behaved as such; on the other hand, the governor and the intendant, judging the new colony to be completely outside their jurisdiction, seemed reluctant to do more than was strictly necessary for it. It should also be noted that it was very imprudent to appoint a foreigner who barely spoke the French language and whose talents and character had never been tested, to found a colony in an island as little known as Madagascar, where he himself had never landed, and to leave him the choice of the place where he would settle, without assigning him any certain rights, any regular administrative relations, or any assured help in terms of men and money. It is really strange that, three years later, Benyowszky could say that he had never been informed of the minister's plans. It is therefore probable that this affair was left, like so many others, to the decision of a clerk and that the Comte de Boynes signed, without attaching any importance to it, this order in which, after all, it was only a question of 200 foreigners or vagrants destined to renew, at their own risk, a failed attempt at colonisation.

No Frenchman should be surprised by such carelessness.

It does not seem that M. de Boynes had the time to deal with Madagascar again. But the following year, Turgot, before taking over the general control, was, for a few weeks, Minister of the Navy. It was he who received the correspondence sent in December 1773 from the Île de France: Intendant Maillart had had, from the very first days, some disputes with Benyowszky and his letters bore clear signs of his discontent. In a letter dated July 1774, Turgot felt he had to determine the plan conceived by his predecessor: "Everything had to be reduced," he replied, "to a simple post through which useful links could be formed with the main chiefs of the country. The establishment and the person in charge of it were submitted to your authority; I cannot conceal from myself, by reading the correspondence of M. de Benyowszky, how much this officer deviated from his instructions; but he cannot and must not act except in consequence of your orders, and, according to this principle, I have reason to hope that you will neglect nothing in order to lead this establishment to perfection. I urge you to watch over the conduct of this officer directly, and not to accede to any of his requests unless they are perfectly in keeping with the interests of His Majesty and the good of his service."

At the same time he wrote to the Baron:

"I cannot conceal my surprise at reading your plans for Madagascar; instead of a simple trading post, it is a colony that you want to found there. You must, Sir, abandon all these ideas and return to the principles set out in your instructions. It is not a colony, but a simple post that must be established. The arms and munitions of war which you have been granted are not intended to make conquests, but to ensure your establishment.

Although you were told that the correspondence which you would be obliged to have with Messrs de Ternay and Maillart in relation to your operations should not exempt you from giving a direct account to the Minister of the Navy of all that you would do for the success of your mission, it was never the intention to leave you the absolute master of the establishment of Madagascar; and he was always subordinate, as were you, to the administrators of the Île de France.

"Your mission was to be reduced to a simple post which would allow you to make contact with the natives of the country, to form a trade with them and to put an end to the abuse of dealing in money. I would like to persuade myself that you will do nothing to make up for the mistakes you have made, by carefully abstaining from everything that has to do with the expenditure and handling of the stores, the details of which are the sole responsibility of the administrative officer charged with carrying out the duties of authorising officer with you. I cannot conceal from you that if you were to depart from these principles, I would be forced to take orders from the king for your recall."

It is probable that these precise and severe letters would have put an end, if not to the mission, at least to Benyowszky's imaginations; unfortunately, they remained at the stage of a project and were not sent, no doubt because of the short time that Turgot spent at the Ministry of the Navy. When M. de Sartine took over, it turned out that the establishment had been maintained and nobody had provided him with information on the origins of this enterprise, so he let things go. Later, having read the contradictory letters from Benyowszky and the administrators of the islands, he had an enquiry made and saw, as he said in a report to the king dated 1776, "that chance alone or rather the unexpected arrival of a troop of Hungarians in France had given the minister the idea of giving Baron Benyowszky, who was the leader of the troop, a mission to France, This opinion was confirmed by the fact that this officer and the corps of volunteers under his command were embarked at Lorient and sent to Madagascar without instructions or a memorandum outlining the conduct they were to follow."

The conduct of M. de Boynes should be regarded as frivolous if the history of the French administration, at least in the time of the fallen regimes, were not full of such incidents.

Perhaps we can also find some excuse for the excessive ambition and imagination of the fiery adventurer whose colonial fantasies we must now trace. When a leader does not know what he wants to do, subordinates easily take license. But should one ever take license, as Benyowszky did, with the truth?

The raising of the men of his corps being finished at the beginning of March 1773, the colonel went to Lorient to take passage with the second echelon. The first had left on the *Étoile*, the third was to follow on the *Laverdy*. He says in his *Memoirs* that having received the letter addressed to the governor and the intendant of the Île de France, he made representations on the fact that the slightest lack of will on their part could cause his expedition to fail; he asked that the terms of this letter be corrected. The minister told him, he claims, that the most important articles of this letter had been changed and that the administrators of the Île de France would be informed that he remained master of his operations, and that they had nothing else to do but to supply him with what he might need. It is certain that the baron behaved as if things had been so settled and that he does not appear at any time to have understood that he was subordinate to anyone but the minister. Yet he makes no reference to these representations in the correspondence he exchanged from Lorient, before his departure, with M. de Boynes. He nevertheless went into all the details of the service. It was then, for example, that he took the liberty, as he says, of sending him :

"I will give you, my lord, a cipher to decipher, if there are any, some secret reports to be made on my part, to give you a direct account of all that I have done or that I will find it good to do. There are times when we will not know how to take enough precautions not to expose the accounts to fall into the hands of strangers. I hope, my Lord, that you will not at least disapprove of my zeal, if the thing seems unnecessary to you. I shall always wait for your permission to use this cipher." This letter is in his handwriting; it proves that Benyowszky did not write French correctly, and that, consequently, neither the memoirs nor the letters we have to use are, at least in form, his work. As for the cipher, it does not seem to have been used at all; it was childishly simple; *d* was to be read as *a*, *a* as *d*; *g* would be read as *e* and *e* as *g*; there was likewise a transposition of *l* and *i*, of *r* and *o*, of *p* and *u*. Thus, according to the baron's scheme, *b, r, l, u, g, s*, is Boynes; and he signed his letter: *I am with the deepest respect,* Mrnsglengpo (My Lord), your most humble and obedient servant, Bdorn ag Bgnlrpszki (Baron of Benyowszky) He embarked on 13 April 1773 and left on 22 April: he took with him, in addition to about fifteen officers, Mme. Benyowszka, her sister, Mlle. Henska, a maid and four servants. The navigation was neither very fast nor very successful; the ship took three months to round the Cape of Good Hope. Scurvy attacked the crew and the soldiers; a lieutenant of the Volunteers was lost. The lack of food and illness forced the captain to abandon False-Bay on 25 July. The baron had used the crossing to train his officers and soldiers. After a few days of rest, they set sail again for the Île de France and arrived there on 21 September. The Chevalier de Ternay, governor, was then in Bourbon; the intendant, M. Maillart, was ill and could not receive the baron; the latter had, while waiting for M. de Ternay, to camp his troop at Grande-Rivière, so as not to disturb the three regiments garrisoned on the island.

It does not seem that the announcement of an expedition to Madagascar was received in the Île de France with much enthusiasm; the inhabitants of the island were used to trading there quite freely and the rumour that all trade would be forbidden was not done to conciliate them.

Moreover, Benyowszky, as he moved away from France, felt his ambition growing; he announced to the minister, as soon as he disembarked, his intention "to form not only a *vast and ample colony, as rich as it is formidable, but also a shield against our enemies in India*". He had calculated the costs, he only needed 100,000 ecus, 150 European families, because the people of the Île de France and Bourbon seemed to him too corrupt. He already saw himself as master of Madagascar and claimed that the ports of Bassora, Muscat and Socotora would be supplied with food in this island whose trade would soon ruin that of all the other nations in the Indian seas. This was a new project, he said expressly; he addressed the details of it to the minister and, although the plan might seem rash, he hoped that it would be well received:

"1° He would disembark at the place where the first establishment would be formed, enlarge it according to circumstances, secure the surrounding land to sow grains of all kinds, particularly hemp;

"2° He would establish two gardens for the king, one intended for the subsistence of the hospital and the other to help the ships which would come to rest;

"3° He would plant 5,000 coffee plants, as many cotton plants, sugar cane and pepper. In two years, the coffee and cotton would produce at least 150,000 ecus of fixed income for the king, which would increase each year, especially if the women of the country could be accustomed to spinning cotton. While waiting for the sugar factories to be set up, he would have the sugar canes distilled with rice and brandy according to the Chinese method. This brandy, used in the slave trade, cattle trade and rice trade, would provide an income of 300,000 livres a year. Pepper would also eventually become a capital item;

"4° He would establish in the western part of this island, at the Baie des Volontaires, a second settlement similar to the first;

"5° At the Bombetok River, in the Bay of the Volunteers, he would maintain a military post to introduce the rights of entry and exit of all the goods brought there by the Arabs and of all the foodstuffs of the country which he would give in exchange;

"6° It would forbid any trade in rifles... ;

"7° He would associate himself with a warrior chief of the country for the operations of the war; but he would choose this chief among those who live in the interior of the land, so that he could not have any communication with our enemies... ;

"8° He would make agreements with the pastoral and agricultural chiefs for all the foodstuffs and productions of the country that he would need;

"9° He would establish a tannery and leather factory, as well as a rope factory;

"10° It would have two ports, one at Antongil Bay, the other at Volontaires Bay, where ships would always be safe;

"11° There would be a store for the navy where the ships would find at all times what they would need in masts, planking, keels and other spares, both in wood and in tar, pitch, etc.

"12° As teak wood, suitable for construction, is very common in the island, he would have ships built, he would employ the local people in navigation, and train excellent sailors who would be an infinite resource for recruiting the king's squadrons. To give more weight to his promises, he undertook within two years to send to Europe a ship built in Madagascar, half the crew of which would be composed of the inhabitants of the island;

"13° He would look for iron and copper mines, which are very common there, and even for those of gold and silver, which the inhabitants would be happy to exploit. He would look for an outlet for crystals, topaz and other precious stones;

"14° He *would supply the islands of France and Bourbon with 3,000 negroes for 1 million*, which today cost 2,400,000 livres, which would make 1,400,000 livres in profits for the king. He would also send them to all our colonies in America and, giving them away at a lower price, he would keep in our possessions 12 millions a year that are paid abroad for the negroes that he smuggles in;

"15° Finally, Madagascar, having reached the perfection of its establishment, would offer the Île de France resources in terms of men and food, and the squadrons would find a safe haven there. They could be refurbished, masted and armed there... Our establishments would be impregnable." Not only did M. de Benyowszky vouch for the preservation of the island, but he announced that in two years he would have a formidable army in Madagascar and a squadron capable of undertaking ventures at sea.

He had forgotten his true mission on the way: these new plans were pure dreams. But he was going to present these dreams as realities in his correspondence, and already, for such extensive views, his troop no longer seemed strong enough: he asked permission to increase its strength by raising each company from 79 to 120 men. He wanted to be assured of an annual support of 80 recruits. As their weapons and equipment had not been dispatched at the same time as the volunteers, he had been obliged to borrow from the stores of the Île de France rifles and pistols out of use to make them exercise. He also had to buy 60 rifles and 60 pairs of pistols with his own money to distribute them to the detachment of vanguard which he sent to Madagascar. In November 1773, he sent a list of complaints which suggests a few thoughts:

it is obvious that he had been sent from France without being given any food, money or trade goods; the minister had assumed that all these could be supplied to him in the islands in sufficient quantity. Either Benyowszky feared that the intendant and the governor would be ill-disposed towards him, or, more probably, he did not want to depend on them for his supplies, he asked for a whole assortment of trade goods, such as cloth, brandy, and hardware, and asked to be sent master workers of various trades, carpenters, tailors, blacksmiths, and weavers. He also needed cannons and a 600-ton ship to service his establishment. Thus, even before he had set foot on the soil of Madagascar, there was a complete opposition between the views of the minister, who was sending a foreigner almost at random to hold the modest rank of provider of the islands, and those of the proud magnate who aspired to play the role of conqueror.

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CHAPTER IV

Benyowszky's first disputes with the administrators of the islands. - He settled in Antongil Bay. - He announces to the minister that he has explored and soon that he has submitted Madagascar (1774-1776) ¹.

From the very first days, serious disagreements broke out between the baron and the island administration. On the arrival of the *Marquise-de-Marboeuf*, the officers of this vessel complained to the naval commander that they had been assaulted by Benyowszky's officers. M. de Ternay was obliged to use his authority to allow the sailors to return to their ship from which the others had expelled them. Benyowszky had naturally taken up the cause of his people. A few days later, as he demanded trading goods for the trade he intended to make in Madagascar, the Commissioner of the Navy, Maillart-Dumesle, who was acting as Intendant, complained to him that the orders received from France lacked precision, and that he would take measures to provide the new establishment with the necessary supplies, but only if he himself had any superfluous goods. He refused to recognize in their capacity the lieutenant-colonel and the major of the corps of the Volunteers because one did not represent to him the extract of the ordinance which had named them. He had designated an authorising officer, Sieur Vaisse, to act as accountant to the baron;

1 * A. C. F. Madagascar. C5, 4, 5 (1774-1776), for the dates indicated. *Mémoires de Benyowszky*

but this man seemed to consider himself as Maillart's delegate and, consequently, as independent of Benyowszky. We have seen how ambiguous the letters of the Comte de Boynes were: it is certain, however, that in Paris they never thought of granting Benyowszky full independence nor did they want to impose on the intendant of the islands the obligation to provide for all his whims without counting the cost. Thus, Benyowszky, finding his troop too small, had the idea of raising a free company of hunters; he asked M. de Ternay for permission, which was granted, but on condition that the raising would be done at his expense. Now, the operation having begun, Benyowszky, forgetting his commitment, asked for 10,000 livres for the raising of the men, and, a second time, 12,000 without specifying anything, contenting himself with warning that he would render a special account in Paris for this last sum. The authorising officer Vaisse, on receiving these requests, referred them to Maillart; the latter, considering these expenses unjustified and relying on the letter of the minister which declared that the expedition of Madagascar should not cause any extraordinary expenditure, considering on the other hand that neither he nor M. de Ternay had been informed, as was appropriate, of the plans of the baron, refused to authorise Vaisse to pay the requested funds. Then began a bitter-sweet correspondence between the baron and Maillart, in which the adventurer, accustomed to relying only on himself, and the rigid bureaucrat brought to bear, the one his ardour and impatience with all discipline, the other the meticulous and procedural spirit which is sometimes the strength, sometimes the weakness, and in any case the renown of the French Administration.

"The obstinacy of *Sieur Vaisse*," wrote the baron to *Maillart*, "to upset me and arrange everything to his liking, determines me to express my displeasure. *M. de Marigny* will enumerate for you several sinister steps taken by *Sieur Vaisse* and I dare to assure you that I have experienced a stupid exorbitance on his part since his appointment."

"It is out of order," replied *Maillart*, "that I give funds from the king without knowing the use of them, and the king's orders do not prescribe me to give you funds in any other way than the ordinary one and the rule for all the expenses of His Majesty." This was followed by some explanations on the customs of public accounting and the affirmation that *Vaisse* remained bound by the ordinary rules and subordinate to *Maillart*: "He has nothing to do with the part which concerns you," said the intendant, "but he is responsible for his own and is accountable only to me. This lesson in public law seems to have irritated the baron, who replied the same day: "I am not surprised by your expressions: you have too openly declared your wishes concerning my mission to expect others from you... *M. Vaisse* will follow your orders as long as he likes: they have nothing in common with me. The minister has already been informed of this by my previous letters, of this choice you have made. I can do without an administrator of this kind. I beg you and urge you to replace him with another, otherwise you will do very well not to give me any... After all the steps you have taken and the replies you have given me, I can only see a strong lack of willingness on your part. Correspondence would only serve to embitter us and maintain the misunderstanding. I will therefore end it and follow the minister's orders (24 December 1773)." Nothing was less administrative than this style and it is understandable that *Maillart-Dumesle* was surprised. He replied that his way of being and serving the king sufficiently answered the baron's insinuations and that, since the baron did not want *Sieur Vaisse*, no one would be given to him, and that he would remain responsible to the minister and the king.

Benyowszky complained directly to the Count de Boynes the next day, accusing Maillart of having refused all help to the first detachment sent to the Isle of Maroce on 3 November and complaining bitterly about the difficulties he was putting in his mission. Maillart-Dumesle lost no more time in making the dispute known to Paris and in a soberly and clearly written letter (27 December 1773), he made the facts known, forwarded copies of the baron's letters, his replies and the letters of the chevalier de Ternay which confirmed his statement. The precision of the grievances and the moderation of the form give Maillart's letters a character of veracity and reason which those of the baron do not present. It is certain that the latter had never had the opportunity to learn to obey either in Poland or on board the *Saint-Peter-and-Saint-Paul*; even less did he know the inflexible rules of form in a policed state. He who had thought himself an independent leader was being lectured by a mere accountant. Was it up to the future conqueror of Madagascar to stoop to petty operations, to time roles in which only bags of flour and rolls of cloth were involved? It is true that he had not been sent to play Alexander: but Benyowszky could not remember that. Thus began the relationship between the administrators and the leader of the small troop that was going to try to colonise the Big Island.

In fact, it is possible that the baron's mind was irritated by the knowledge that he had their opinion against his plans. They were not, however, hostile in principle to the establishment; for several years everyone had been concerned about it. The idea was discussed, but opinions were, as always, divided. They themselves had sent, during the months of July and August 1773, two small ships to explore the north-east coast of Madagascar, from Antongil Bay to Cape Saint-Sebastien, which was little known until then. According to the report of the officers, M. de Ternay was preparing to make proposals to the minister concerning a settlement.

He did not have to explain his intention or the basis on which he wanted to found it, because the arrival of the baron suspended his project, especially as the one that was about to be carried out was much more important. It is unlikely that the Chevalier de Ternay was not sincere when he declared himself willing to make every effort to contribute to the Baron's success: but it is possible, after all, that he did not put the same zeal into it as he did into his own project.

It was he who proceeded, in concert with the owner colonel, to the formation and arming of the corps of Volunteers, and their relations appear to have been marked by a sincere cordiality. However, in agreement with Maillart, he felt he had to make certain observations to the Minister. As it was forbidden to approach the points where the new posts would be set up, and according to Benyowszky, this prohibition was to extend from the vicinity of Foulepointe to Cape Amber, Ternay asked permission for the ships on this coast to finish their business and to take on board their belongings. He did not conceal the fact that the Baron's project would cause very considerable expenses and that nothing seemed more uncertain than the returns on which the Baron was counting to cover his expenses. In the following December (1773), when Benyowszky had made his character and what he called his plans a little clearer, Maillart-Dumesle was less circumspect about his own feelings, having no reason to spare a man who did not spare him.

"I would dare to guarantee you today," he wrote to the Count de Boynes, "that even if we had got hold of the only man capable of making an extraordinary project succeed, he would fail in the one conceived by M. de Benyowszky. I do not fear to announce to you that, not only will this officer not carry out anything useful for the service but that it will cost the king many men and money..."

He only puts terms to his claims that of his wills, and his wills have no terms.

"I add that he will complete the disruption of what remains of tranquillity among the peoples among whom he will establish himself, that he will finally close for us, and perhaps forever, all the doors through which we could have succeeded in forming a solid establishment in Madagascar, but which can only be stable as long as it is established by the means of gentleness and conciliation, virtues which are the antipodes of M. de Benyowszky's character and of which no one is less capable than he. de Benyowszky's character and of which no one is less capable of making use than he is." (27 December 1773).

This was, as we shall see later, a prophetic view.

Benyowszky received, in December 1773 by the ship *Laverdy*, the 100 recruits who were to complete his corps to 240 men. On the 3rd of November he had sent 30 volunteers and 1 officer to occupy the island of Maroce in the bay of Antongil, to prepare some huts and to enter into contact with the natives. M. de Ternay advised him not to leave until after the bad season, that is to say at the end of March; but the baron replied that he was waiting for European ships which were due to arrive in the bay at precisely that time and Ternay no longer had any objections; moreover, he considered the bay of Antongil to be less unhealthy than Tamatave, which had first been considered for the establishment.

The expedition set sail on 2 February 1774: it consisted of about 300 men, both soldiers and sailors; after a successful crossing, it landed at Maroce Island on 14 February. This island is opposite a fairly deep bay which the French had called Port-Choiseul; but Benyowszky replaced the name of the disgraced minister with that of the Comte de Boynes. As for the island of Maroce, it became the island of Aiguillon.

In the bay flows a large river, whose native name is Antanambalana; our merchants called it Tinguebale or Tanguébale. On both sides of the river, at its mouth, there were two rather long points, the level of which rose only about 4 feet above the sea, so that at each tide the lowest parts were flooded and transformed into marshes: only a small plateau of about 600 square feet could be seen emerging. It was on one of these marshy points of land, excellent as a military position since it was between the sea and the river, but obviously unhealthy, that the baron established his small colony. He named it Louisbourg. He soon reported to the minister on his initial work: "The place I have chosen, my lord," he said, "is the healthiest, without question, on the whole island. To further ensure its healthiness, I had the marshes that bordered it dried up and I had fresh water fountains established. The port is one of the most magnificent that one can find in these parts. To dominate it, I have built batteries, and I will establish, for the ease of loading and unloading ships, a dock with a pontoon. I have the honour of sending you herewith the plan of my position, on which I mark the works which I have carried out, in spite of the little help which the Île de France provided me with... M. Maillart did not provide me with the tools that I so earnestly requested from him; for all resource, he sent me 7 axes and 2 wheelbarrows... If I had not had the precaution of making my own provisions, which I use today with much satisfaction for the troop, I would have been in the case of losing half my troop miserably. It is then that the jealous of this establishment would have cried out that the country was unhealthy, that it was a vast French cemetery. I have only lost since the 9th of November 1773 until today 9 soldiers and 4 sailors, of which 3 of the former killed themselves, before my arrival, and 1 drowned;

The discipline of my troop and the order which reigns there, since my arrival, has dazzled the natives of the country. All the chiefs of this part of the island have sworn an oath of fidelity, recognising themselves as subjects of His Majesty, our master; they have abdicated all their claims to the places where I have established myself, and to all the other shores of the sea, solemnly agreeing that all the shores of the island will belong to the French.

"You ordered me, Monseigneur, to reconnoitre Tamatave; I carried out your order, but I found nothing but a vast swamp and submerged land.

"Please believe, Monseigneur, that there is not in all the Indies a port as safe as the one I have chosen, which is today called the port of Boynes. The island of Aiguillon, which is situated at the entrance to this port, and which covers the anchorage, fortified by nature, will defend the port and prevent its approach. Louisbourg will always remain the chief town. I am busy today to establish a post at Foulepointe and the other at Vohémar; to make myself master of all the traffic on this island. As soon as I manage to open a passage by land to the west, I will establish the fourth post. At present, I only need prompt assistance, of which I enclose herewith the state of my requests."

What miracles were performed in six weeks with less than 200 men, 7 axes and 2 wheelbarrows!

Attached to this letter of 22 March 1774 was a statement in which he requested the dispatch of a vessel of 600 tons, loaded with wine, brandy and flour, 200 recruit men, 6 carpenters, 2 blacksmiths and 2 masons, 3 officers of the rank of captain to command the various posts, 2 surgeons and medicines, 6 mortars of 12 inches and 16 pieces of cannon with their supply of ammunition, 2 chaplains, an assortment of tools of all kinds and trading goods.

In September of the same year, Benyowszky reported to the Minister that, as he had been unable to fill in the marshes around Louisbourg, or to raise the ground above the level of the tides, he had experienced fatal exhalations during the drought and had been obliged to seek a healthier place in the interior of the country, to which the sick had been transported. There they recovered their health, and for this reason the new post was called the Health Plain. He declared the place to be above all praise, both for its fertility and its healthiness. It was situated 5 or 6 leagues from Louisbourg, on the river itself, which was navigable up to that point: the plain was 3 leagues long and 3 1/2 deep. After many interviews with the chiefs, to whom the country belonged, the baron had been ceded the plain and all the valley up to the source of the river for 12,000 livres once paid. Nevertheless, he had built a fort at the mouth of the river to protect the stores. Within the enclosure he had built a general store, a food store, a gunpowder store, a barracks, a guardhouse, an arms store, a house for the commandant, another for the major, a storeroom for distributing food, an office for the administrative officers, a store for the provisions of the commandant and the major, a prison, kitchens, a hen-house, not to mention other constructions intended to receive the rice that would come from the trade. On the island of Aiguillon, there was a house containing 4 rooms and a living room, 6 other smaller houses and an oven. An area of 10 arpents ¹ had been cleared. This clearing was the king's garden.

At the same time he sent the plans of these buildings; they are still in the archives of the colonies. It was difficult to question the reality of buildings whose drawings were in front of one's eyes. The protocol of the work carried out by the engineering department, according to the baron's orders, goes into the most minute detail.

1 1 arpent = 58 metres / 190 feet

It relates not only the orders given, but also the detailed account of the days of men that the work accomplished cost. This can be judged from a few extracts relating to the works just mentioned.

"It is ordered to Sieur Marange, engineer, after having surveyed the plan, to recognize the site of Marancet to proceed to the filling of the marshes in order to be able to have there a city on the edge of the Tanguébale river and a fort as well as the construction of the various buildings which will be necessary." (February 15, 1774, on board the *Desforges*)

The expenditure was 19,790 livres.

"It is ordered to Sieurs Marange and Gareau de Boispréaux, the latter, assistant engineer : 1° to survey the plan of the Corderie cove on the island of Aiguillon, to drain the marshes that flood it and to build a large hut and 6 huts for the housing of the sick; secondly, to make a path to the mountain of Découverte to place the observation pavilion there; 3° to build 4 huts for the convalescents in the Convalescents Cove; 4° to build the bakery; 5° id. A storehouse and 2 huts halfway up the mountain for the accommodation of slaves suffering from smallpox." (14 April 1774).

The expenditure for this last work, according to the account of the engineers, was 23,810 livres.

"Gareau de Boispréaux is ordered to carry out the project for the Vallé-Amboak plain, otherwise known as the Plaine-de-Santé, to fill in the shallows and make the necessary cuts and clearings to make the air healthier and the land suitable for farming. He will make the necessary buildings and erect a fort on the mountain which dominates the plain; of course, for the ease of manoeuvres, he will have the top of the mountain razed, cut down all the woods, as well as fill in the ditches at the foot of the mountain for the building of the government and other necessary houses." (July 21, 1774).

These expenses amounted to 38,254 livres.

We can see that Benyowszky gave his orders with the same tranquillity as if he had had an inexhaustible treasure. Who would believe, reading this imperious style, that the baron only had 200 white men and a few slaves to carry out his buildings and earthworks? One does not know which to admire more, the imperturbable assurance of the commander or the administrative serenity of the engineer who evaluates, metre by metre, the cost of the excavations and embankments, gives the exact figure for the number of days of workmen, and joins the cavalier view of the work to the estimate that he draws up. Nothing was better done to give ministers, living 3,000 leagues away, the certainty that the reality was in accordance with the report that was sent to them. It takes a lot of distrust to question the existence of a fort, a government, a bakery, when one has before one's eyes, on the one hand, the design of the building, on the other hand, the price of the raw materials, the cost of the construction, the number of white workers and the number of black workers employed in these undertakings.

Let us continue with Benyowszky himself, a complaisant guide if ever there was one, the account of his explorations, the sequence of his conquests. So, if these accounts were at first given too much credit in Paris, it is not irrelevant to show that one could be fooled by them without being a fool. It will then be time to compare them with those of eyewitnesses, with the true reports of the administrators of the Île de France.

On September 7, 1774, six months after his arrival, the baron wrote to M. de Boynes: "Having recognized the coastline of Madagascar and the situation of the bays, ports and inlets, I took note of the advantages I could obtain by establishing, from distance to distance, various posts, the details of which are as follows :

the first is at Foulepointe, very necessary for the ease of boarding and by the confluence of the trade which, so to speak, is concentrated in this place: a strong palisade surrounded by a ditch has already been built there (I have named this small redoubt Fort-Français), two large stores, an ox park, a strong house for the slaves, a barracks, a hospital and a house for the commander. Sieur Mallendre was in command with an officer under his command, 35 volunteers and 30 men from the company of black janissaries. The command of this post extends almost as far as the Fort-Dauphin."

One will undoubtedly find some exaggeration in this, for from Foulepointe to Fort-Dauphin there are about 800 kilometres; but the clerks, and even the minister to whom this letter was sent, must hardly have known the lies, as Benyowszky says, of these two establishments.

We can see that he is talking about black janissaries: at the beginning of his letter, he had said that he was going to form two companies of Madagascan janissaries: three pages later, he already employs them, their garrison is designated, they are there and are doing their service.

"The second post, he continues, is at Manahar, situated between Foulepointe and the port of Boynes. The buildings that have been constructed there consist of a stockade, a store, a commander's house and a barracks. This post is entrusted to a sergeant with 7 volunteers and 12 black janissaries, 1 interpreter and 1 trading clerk under his orders. The third is at the island of Aguilde... I maintain a post of 12 volunteers and 6 black militia in this island, commanded by a sergeant, and a pilot for the reconnaissance of the vessels that arrive there. The fourth is at Louisbourg, commanded by Captain de Sanglier... the fifth at the Plain of the Volunteers. This post is commanded by myself, with 2 officers, 50 volunteer soldiers and 30 blacks. The sixth is at the Fort des Volontaires at the entrance to the woods, on the passage to the west.

The buildings consist of 1 stockade, 1 store and 1 small barracks, the command of which is entrusted to a sergeant with 4 volunteers and 6 blacks... The seventh is at Antonguin, otherwise known as Fort de la Découverte: a stockade with 2 large stores, a barracks for the volunteers, another for the blacks and a hospital have been built there. It is the most beautiful country one can meet. The plain is 12 leagues wide and 60 long: it is in pastures and is watered by the great river Soffyas (Sofia) which is $\frac{1}{4}$ of a league wide. I have entrusted the command of it to Sieur Corby, an officer in the retinue, who has under his command 10 volunteers and 40 blacks, who work to make the way to the woods and build there, from distance to distance, houses for the convenience of travellers, and which serve me today as warehouses for the trade in oxen. Antonguin has already provided me with 160 cows and 100 oxen. The eighth, I do not yet have the news of its perfection... It is M. Mayeur, interpreter, who is in charge of training it, at the edge of the sea, on the western coast. He has 10 volunteers and 50 blacks with him.

"In another letter to the minister, dated 1 September, Benyowszky said: I recognised that the price of oxen was much lower on the west coast than on the east coast of the island. This reason combined with the intention of forming an establishment on this west coast to ensure the trade of blacks and oxen on behalf of the king, to facilitate the trade of Mozambique, Sofala and Monbassa, and the Comoros Islands, determined me to undertake to seek the opening to pass from the bay of Antongil to the west coast... On the 1st of May (1774), I sent Sieur Mayeur, interpreter, with one of the chiefs of our allies, 80 blacks of whom I formed a company of militia and 20 volunteer soldiers to go up the great river to its source and then take the road to the west of the island by land in order, as far as possible, to reach the bay of Morungano... I did not receive any news of this detachment for thirty-six whole days...,

but at last I was pleased to see two of my volunteers arrive with eight blacks, who brought me packages from my interpreter and above all news of the perfect health of all my people in spite of the tiring marches they had endured through the woods and mountains. They reported to me that we were very far inland from the island and that they did not experience any of the fog that we experience in Louisbourg, the source of all the diseases in the country. Following the copy of two letters from Mayeur, which appear to have been carefully revised by Benyowszky's secretary, as they are too correct to be the work of the uneducated interpreter whose authentic letters will be found later. However, as these letters, as they stand, form part of Benyowszky's historical system, we cannot dispense with quoting some passages from them.

"In consequence of your orders, Mayeur is reported to have written, we left on the 1st of May, going up the river, by local boats, and on the third day we went to the source of the river, which leads straight to the north-west, having up to the place of the source an equal depth of 7 feet. I had a stockade and storehouse built at the entrance to the wood, with houses 50 feet long and 20 wide. Having finished this work, we entered the wood. Having found an impassable path, I had it widened to a yard and a half, which now forms a convenient path... On the second day, we found a very extensive plain, where very little work had to be done on the road. Directing the road to the north-west, we made four leagues: on the third day we made about the same; but on the fourth, we hardly made a league; we had to work on the road over a high mountain: the fifth compensated us: having found a pleasant path, we made eight or nine leagues; on the sixth, we left the woods, having, for the convenience of those who followed us, made a hut at each station. As soon as we left the woods, we found the country in pastures and many wild cattle, without any wood other than tamarinds and lemon trees.

Having walked five hours across this immense plain, we arrived at a village called Andravoaré, where we were very well received by the chief... This is what I learned: This country formerly belonged to the queen of Bombetok; but that, as the fate of the war was more favourable to the king of Boina (Boueni), it had fallen into her power... I inquired as to the way to the bay of Morungano, and learned, with great displeasure, that I had to cross impassable mountains... I therefore asked if it would be easier for me to reach the home of the king of Boina, and I learned that I could get there from this village in ten days, having always a good way, and the chief himself... offered to lead me to another village where a greater chief than himself lived. I accepted...; I stayed three days in this village to rest my people. On the fourth day we set out for Antongouin, still travelling through flat country, watered by streams, until we reached the great river Sofia, which we passed in large local boats. From there we went up a hill which led us to the large village called Antongouin."

Welcomed by the village chief, Mayeur received two oxen and rice as gifts. There was a palaver with an exchange of speeches in accordance with the usual emphases of the savages: "The greatest warrior that the soil of Madagascar has borne, Baron de Benyowszky, general of thousands of white men, armed men who shed blood to make the good happy and punish the wicked, had been sent by the great king of France to make a royal establishment and to set up trading posts; he had sent Mayeur to set up one in this village." The village chief did not dare to accede to the request without the consent of the king of Boina. The latter having finally given his consent, the post was established and Mayeur left with the men he kept as an escort for the country of Boina.

When he reached the main village, he was received in a friendly manner by the king, who ceded the port of Bombetok to the French, with a space of 3 leagues inland. The king promised to supply 1 million pounds of rice, 2 to 3,000 oxen and 1,200 slaves each year, so that the establishment of Bombetok gave Benyowszky an outlet to the west coast. The baron, in transcribing Mayeur's alleged letters, even announced that he had chartered a ship to send it immediately to Boina.

"There," he concluded, "is the faithful state of the distribution of my little corps, which does double what I could have hoped for." He nevertheless asked for reinforcements in men and the sending of considerable aid. How can one not be deceived by such well presented accounts? And while they show Mayeur negotiating at Bombetok around the month of June, since the baron says that he remained without news of him for thirty-six days and that he left on the 1st of May, the engineer's protocol shows us the same Mayeur receiving, on the 10th of June, the order to go from Louisbourg to Angontsy to take care of opening a road. We know, moreover, from his own testimony, that he never went to Bombetok: he was stopped by the Sakalaves; it was with the greatest difficulty that he escaped their ambushes and returned to Antongil Bay.

On 22 September 1774, Benyowszky wrote to the Duc d'Aiguillon and repeated in more or less the same terms what he had said to the Comte de Boynes; he added, not without impudence: 'Posterity will read with great pleasure the history of the revolutions of Madagascar: It will learn that a body of men composed of 237 heads, reduced by illness and fatigue to 160, subjugated an island whose circumference is 800 leagues long... I have attached to the plan of the Plaine de Santé the general map of Madagascar and a profile of the opening of the passage through the interior of the island from the east coast to the west. This enterprise cost me infinite pains,

but for which I am well rewarded by the benefits I bring to the establishment by this means. I count today 32 provinces of the island of Madagascar subject to our establishment, whose chiefs of the country pay an annual tribute, which will provide enough to maintain my corps. In addition to this tribute, I have provided the Madagascar fund with an income of 150,000 livres tournois, cash, and I see myself assured of a net profit of nearly 4 million francs, annually, provided that it pleases M. de Boynes to supply me with the necessary goods."

At the same time, he had addressed a request for assistance to the Minister of the Navy, which the latter did not consider it appropriate to grant him without restriction. He asked for a 300-ton ship fully armed and one of 150 tons, 300 recruits and permission to form a company of hunters, 100,000 ecus in cash, and several schooners to serve the coast of the east.

He asked for 12 Swedish-style cannon, 6 mortars, 30 espingoles, ¹ 24 pierriers, ² fireworks, anchors, flags, 10 hand mills for the troops. He needed an officer of a higher rank to be second in command in Madagascar, 4 others with the rank of captain, 1 storekeeper, 4 junior employees, 15 writers, 4 priests, 4 doctors, 4 master carpenters and 12 assistants, 2 master masons, 2 blacksmiths, bakers, gardeners, tanners, coopers, butchers, peasants to cultivate the land, and about sixty foundlings, both boys and girls, from the age of 2 to 15, in order to form the basis of a colony: It is understandable that the Comte de Boynes hesitated to grant everything; but Benyowszky insisted.

"These reinforcements," he said, "are absolutely necessary for Madagascar. I ardently desire that my expressions be sufficient to put before your eyes the true state of Madagascar. I protest to you that I have not yet touched all the advantages that this island offers:

1 'espingole' – type of short-range shotgun

2 'pierrier' – a swivel gun

and far from being able to confide the slightest idea of my plans to anyone, I must, on the contrary, keep them secret: fortunately, my natural constitution has overcome all fatigue and all ills."

It was evident from these letters, written in the first weeks of September 1774, that in only a few months Madagascar had been almost completely explored, and even partly occupied; a road had been opened between the east and west coasts, 32 provinces had been subdued, revenues were assured, and everything was prepared for the establishment of a real colony. Let us put ourselves in the place of the ministers for whom these reports were intended, let us imagine them accustomed to the paperwork accuracy of French employees, convinced that a man who quotes figures and states facts is not lying, because the multiplied controls of a learned administration make lying dangerous, almost impossible; it is not admissible that such assertions should have provoked the slightest doubt. The Comte de Boynes, like the Duc d'Aiguillon, lacked a certain knowledge of the place; it would have made them, from the very first word, see the implausibility of the exploits that were too brilliant, the explorations that were too rapid, the marvellous conquests that the Hungarian adventurer made in his chair.

He did not deny these admirable beginnings and knew how to put the necessary progression into his correspondence. He wrote on 16 March 1775: "It is with the greatest pleasure that I have the honour of rendering you accounts on this object (the passage to the west coast) for which I was so violently thwarted by the Île de France. After having received the dominion of the province of Angontsy, situated to the east and north of the island, and of the chief town, I went to the northernmost point, called Cape Amber.

The chief of this rich country, named Lambouin, having had a war with the Seclaves, a very hardy people who live on the western coast of the island, came to ask me for help and protection, at the price of submitting himself in perpetuity to the laws of our government and recognising himself as a tributary. I acquiesced in this advantageous proposal, which in a moment made me master of an immense country. A few exploits happily followed forced Prince Savassi, an Arab of the nation, established in the port of Moneyana, to submit and give in to the French flag. This port, the most convenient for navigation and the most advantageous for trade, opened the key for me to the coast of Africa, as well as the Red Sea, and I have fixed my operations in this place, while awaiting the help and orders that I have requested from you, Monseigneur. The trade which Madagascar has acquired by the opening of Moneyana passes all expectations, rice being abundant in the northern part, and returning only 4 livres to the king per cent, which is sold for 18 livres on the coast of Africa and finally exchanged for the value of 1,000 livres. A slave by this means returns to the king at 40 livres instead of the 1,200 livres that I was obliged to buy in the Île de France.

"Seeing myself deprived of any help in a time which promises and offers me all the most considerable advantages, I have taken it upon myself to buy, with the help of the purse of my friends, the objects of trade and a ship to open the trade of the coast of Africa... The harvest of rice, this year, is the most considerable that we have yet had. The islanders, encouraged by our stay, have planted everywhere. Unfortunately, the Île de France refused me the trade goods: I had to have recourse to the confidence of the islanders who, on my simple notes, credited about 1 million. I have more than 500 oxen both in Angontsy and in Manahar, Foulepointe and Tamatave. I have informed the Île de France of this help, but this island, in spite of its shortage, does not send for these objects in Madagascar, preferring to go and get them from foreigners...

Obliged to visit the various posts established in the island, I have travelled through the provinces which are subject to us, and I already recognise new natural riches in the country."

Four days later, on 20 March 1776, he added: "To further secure my conquests, Monseigneur, I have had two forts built, one at the port of Vohémar, the other at Morungana in the west of the island. This puts us in a position to extend our operations to the west of the island, despite my small number of people."

However, the draining of the marshes and the clearing of the land had made the air more favourable; since the expedition of the sloop the *Postillon* until that time he had lost only 4 men and the hospitals were empty. If his forces had been such as he had requested, Madagascar would have been subdued in a short time and the government of the island would have paid considerable sums into the king's coffers. Besides, the Île de France did not provide him with anything... he foresaw that it would be very difficult for him to fulfil the promises made to the natives of the country. He had promised to buy them all the rice they harvested. Now, they had sown, for this year, in such a great quantity, that he could hope to treat more than 3 million livres, interesting help for the Île de France: but the intendant Maillart had given up completely to draw food from Madagascar. He reduced the inhabitants to paying 45 livres per cent for rice, because he had it come from Batavia and Bengal, whereas he could have had it at 15 livres supplied by Benyowszky. Benyowszky had lowered the price of blacks to 30 piastres, the value of goods, whereas on his arrival they were worth 65 piastres, and the intendant dared to say that he did not want Malagasy slaves, that he preferred Mozambique slaves. As for the oxen, of which there was a considerable quantity at Louisbourg, Maillart did not want to take them; he had them consumed, which the inhabitants of the Île de France sold to the king at 300 and 400 livres, when Benyowszky offered them at a price of 86 livres.

On 30 May he announced new miracles: "The vast kingdom of Boana or Seclaves, the richest and most powerful, without question, in this island is finally subject to our government. It was on the 1st of May (1775) that the Seclaves came to me. The embassy was composed of 1 prince, 4 first chiefs and 100 armed men who brought 1,000 oxen as a mark of their submission. I concluded a treaty with them similar to that with the other nations. I have the honour of sending it to you herewith in order to put you in a position to judge on the advantages we have obtained in this island. I am asking for help (in the Île de France), but they are refusing me and, instead of helping me, they are putting every obstacle in the way of my progress. I have at present 540 leagues of coast to guard, having only 130 men with me. If the refusals of the Île de France put me in embarrassment, the value of my troop reassures me against any event. The tribute of Madagascar alone amounts this year to 1,000 oxen and 260 thousand of rice, about twenty slaves, without including the profit of the trade, and it must be added that our government is in a position at present to provide for the defence of the island at least 15,000 armed blacks on foot and at least 2,000 others who are embarking on board His Majesty's ships to serve in the other colonies. The fertility of the land deserves by its nature men to cultivate the fields. Two crops of rice and three of corn are usually harvested, wheat comes in wonderfully, especially coffee, of which I have about 8,000 plants in the king's garden and which comes in perfectly. The country is full of cotton and only lacks workers to form factories and deprive this branch of trade of the English in India of their wealth. I will not speak of the mines of which every province is full... Having been unable to obtain any help from the Île de France, I had no other course to take than to buy a snaw for the service of His Majesty. The money which came to me from China, from the Kamchatka galleon which I sold in Canton served me well for the lack of funds."

He ended by asking that a second-in-command be sent to replace him, in view of the great fatigue caused by the obligation to be everywhere at once, for, if he had sacrificed his life to the service of His Majesty, he ardently wished that his work would not perish with him.

At the same time, he sent a copy of a general treaty concluded with the chiefs of the island of Madagascar, by virtue of which all recognised the King of France as their sovereign. Anyone among them who made seditious remarks or failed to pay the agreed tribute would be degraded and sold as a slave. All chiefs would be required to declare thieves, murderers and other offenders to be sold as slaves. They could not hold assemblies except at a place fixed by the government. Each province was to have a special flag, and the inhabitants of each were to wear special plates on their caps, which were to be assigned to them. Each province was to provide a certain number of armed men, as requested by the commander. The chiefs were to oppose the descent of any foreign ships' crews. A school was to be established where the chiefs would send their children to learn French. Any Malagasy who threatened, hit, stole or betrayed a Frenchman would be made a slave. The document was signed or supposedly signed by 12 chiefs whose countries were located from Foulepointe to Vohémar, including Chief Savassi of Morungana.

On the same day that he sent the minister the report just summarised, i.e. 30 May 1776, Benyowszky wrote to the administrators of the Île de France:

"Having had the honour, Gentlemen, of informing you on every occasion of the situation of the establishment which I formed by order of His Majesty, you must not be unaware of the dangers and perils which I ran with all my people... abandoned in an uncultivated country and whose nature we did not know.

We have only the strength of our temperament to thank for our salvation... In the midst of these disasters, seeing, on the one hand, our comrades, torn by a languor arising from dreadful diseases, suffer cruel evils and struggle with death, and, on the other, whole provinces arm themselves against us and begin hostilities, we overcame the ordinary prejudices and, But as it would be boring for you to discuss the details of this enterprise, I am content to announce to you, gentlemen, that it has been perfectly successful.

"The island of Madagascar, from Fort-Dauphin through Cape Amber and Bombetok to the river Seclaves, is entirely subject to our government. There are 8 kings and 122 chiefs who all pay tribute. The main trading posts I have established are: Foulepointe, Mananhar, Louisbourg, Massoualé, Angontsy, Vohémar, Morungana and Bombetok. The chief town is fixed in the province of Antirenglabé, in the centre of the country, in order to be within reach of all the posts. The communication from one to the other is taken by means of the roads which I made practise and it will be still more convenient as soon as the channel is finished which must join the river Ranoufoutchi to that of Renglabé. The tribute that the provinces have already paid this year amounts to 8 slaves, 72 thousand rice and 580 oxen. The minister has particularly recommended to me that the export of foodstuffs should be put on an advantageous footing for the Île de France... I therefore offer to you, gentlemen, to come and fetch a thousand oxen which I have on behalf of the king, as well as nearly 100 tons [*milliers*] of rice."

In exchange, he asked for a certain quantity of effects, of which he sent a statement, announcing that, from November 1774 to the present day, he had lost only 6 men, which proved the healthiness of his establishment in the Plain.

Alongside these triumphant relations, one is somewhat surprised to find the admission of his distress and real weakness.

He wrote on 21 October 1775: "At the end of the last year (1774) I had the honour of passing on my accounts to M. de Boynes by the ship *Postillon*. Since the departure of this vessel, the chiefs of the Île de France have left us in the most profound abandonment. ... They have not blushed to use the most ignominious slander to tarnish my reputation. And all the refusals of help finally thought of throwing my troop into the last despair which I remedied with the greatest pain, stripping myself, as well as my officers, of our necessities, wardrobe and furniture to satisfy the pay of the corps. It is in this state that we await relief or our recall."

One will agree that this style is no longer that of a conqueror! Why recall a victorious troop, whose courage and discipline amaze even this leader, whom nothing had surprised until then, and allege misery to justify this recall when one claims to have all the resources of Madagascar at his disposal? There is a contradiction there which the baron is not afraid of. He always asserted that the whole island was subject to his government, that the last war he had supported against the peoples of the north had made him absolute master. But at the same time he complained that he was unable to maintain all his advantages because of the weakness of his body, half of which he had lost. He assured that with the help he had requested, he would make Madagascar a vast, rich and powerful colony in sixteen months at most. He protested against the tales that M. Maillart had been able to pass on to the court, declaring them false, without knowing them, and giving his honour and reputation as a guarantee of his veracity.

On October 25, he repeated that having been charged with forming an establishment and subjecting the island to the French government, he had accomplished his mission; he complained of the systematic abandonment in which the Île de France had left him, he gave the saddest picture of the state of his men: It seemed to him that they reproached him at every moment for the harshness of their lot by the nakedness which made them like savages; exhausted by work, by relentless running, by the vicissitudes of war, they had lost the taste for the bread and drink of Europe. He owed the preservation of his conquest only to the noble despair which had decided them to end their days, if necessary, with glory, as brave and zealous subjects of the king. But, if help was late, he declared that he did not know what course to take to save the establishment from its loss, adding, moreover, that the reputation he had won in Poland, and which whole nations had not refused him, was nothing compared to that which he had justly earned in Madagascar.

It is certainly difficult to reconcile the shortage of which Benyowszky complains in pathetic terms with the abundance he complacently describes in his letters of the previous May. These thousands of oxen, tribute from the subjugated provinces, these quintals¹ of rice stubbornly offered to the Île de France, which did not want to take them, should have been enough to provide the troops with food and to purchase the goods and objects that were not available on the island. The dilapidated state of the uniforms could also be remedied with the resources of the country. Finally, Benyowszky had sent a ship loaded with negroes to the coast of Africa; he could have negotiated with the Portuguese or the Dutch for the few European goods necessary for the 113 men, the last remnants of his corps of Volunteers. But his distress was never such as he describes here, although he never came close to telling the truth. It suited him to exaggerate it, either to make the best of his alleged exploits, or to harm those he accused of having abandoned him. He seems, moreover, to forget quickly what he writes:

1 1 quintal = 100 pounds weight

three months after having given his situation as hopeless, he resumes the epic tone to give the state of his establishment in January 1776. He then claims to have put more than a third of the island under the domination of the government; he awaits His Majesty's orders to do whatever he pleases in the country; he asks for laws to civilize the provinces submitted in the last war he sustained against various chiefs of the country. To give the town of Louisbourg the healthfulness which it lacked when he founded it, he finally filled in the marshes with which it was surrounded by means of an artificial earth formed of a mixture of charcoal, rock and sand. He replaced the primitive huts of interlaced straw, roughly covered with tree bark, with frame houses in the European style. He has erected a fort, to which he has given the name of Fort Louis, supported by advanced works and defended by 12 cannons; this protects the town from all insults. The richest natives of the country, seeing it in a state of defence, came of their own accord to place themselves under its protection. Diseases, so frequent in principle, have diminished considerably: in six months he has lost only 2 men. Finally, he was responsible for the future of Madagascar. He added that he had reserved for himself on the left bank of the river Tinguebale a stretch of land capable of containing 1,200 families, in a canton full of sugar cane and indigo, suitable, moreover, for cultivation and the maintenance of herds. To support this possession, he had built an earthen fort called Fort Saint-Jean. Five leagues beyond Fort St. Jean was the fort of the Plaine de Santé. Only men and money were needed to make Madagascar a real colony. He thought he could take 1,500 Negroes and 800 Negresses from the island every year without depopulating the country at the advantageous price of 18 piastres instead of the 65 that they used to cost.

A letter, dated 2 January 1776, contains a new statement of the various provinces allied to the government and which have submitted to pay tribute to it.

There are now only 10 provinces, not including the island of Sainte-Marie. The tributes are now estimated for the year at only 11 slaves, 284 oxen, 70 tons of rice, 500 palisades, 600 pounds of rock crystal, 3,500 pounds of benzoin, 2 local boats, 2 dugout canoes, 1,200 pieces of wood, 200 boards, 102 pounds of whale oil. These 10 provinces can together provide 26,500 men of war. These figures were much lower than those he had given in his previous letters, although he still boasted of having subjugated the whole island; but we must give up noting all his contradictions. It is surprising that the office clerks who read them and whose summaries we are analysing for the minister were not struck by them. This is because they did not pass through the same hands. It is also likely that no one, at least in the early years, thought to compare them.

It was in April 1776 that the first mention is made of wars waged against the natives. We know from Captain Kerguelen's account that he assisted Benyowszky in a small expedition against a tribe near Louisbourg: the only result was the burning of a deserted village. This skirmish turned into an epic. There were three wars, one against the Saphirobays, the second against the Antanbours, the third against the Seclaves. The first two peoples were first defeated and subjugated. As for the Seclaves, they had raised 20,000 men and were preparing to attack the chief town of the colony when they were stopped by the resistance of the allied tribes. This gave Benyowszky time to prepare for the fight. He even took the offensive on 1 May 1775. His small army consisted of 45 volunteers, 26 Mozambican slaves trained in gunnery and 25 labourers or servants, a total of 90 men. In addition, he had 4,000 blacks who served only as light troops; he did not count on them for any action.

He embarked at Louisbourg on local boats, disembarked 20 leagues to the north and marched inland for 8 days. On 16 May he found himself in the presence of the enemy and on his territory. He led his army so well that he routed the Seclaves and returned triumphant to Louisbourg after having imposed the conditions he wanted on the defeated. This war, the marches of which, at least, must have been very difficult, had not cost him a single death or wounded. The review of the volunteer corps on 5 June 1776 shows 9 officers and 91 men present, which is a difference of 3 men from the January 1776 report. The enquiry made three months later by Messrs de Bellecombe and Chevreau showed that this alleged war against the Seclaves had not taken place.

Thus, until the last day of his command, Benyowszky persisted in the singular attitude he had taken from the beginning; far from denying or even mitigating the exploits he claimed to have made, the conquests he claimed to have made, he did not cease to support and amplify them, in such a way that, not being able to presume that they were dealing with a liar, the offices had to accept at first as true all his accounts. If any contradiction was found, if the information coming from the Île de France prevented some from adding unreserved faith, they were content to think that, like all great travellers, the baron was inclined to some exaggeration. It will be possible to judge whether the offices erred on the side of severity or on the side of weakness.

CHAPTER V

Benyowszky accuses the intendant and the governor of the islands of wanting to ruin his business. - Affair of the accountant of the Assises. - Shipments made from the islands to Madagascar. - Unfavourable reports on the establishment ¹.

At the same time as Benyowszky sent these grandiloquent accounts to Paris, he complained loudly that the administrators of the islands were unfavourable to him; he went further: he formally accused them of wanting to ruin his establishment because his authority was harming their fortunes by preventing them from engaging in illicit trade, like their predecessors, at the expense of the king and to their great profit. He attributed to this base greed, rather than to the jealousy of command, the determination they put into hindering his activity, into refusing him the trading goods necessary for the trade, into reducing him, as he says, to despair. Whether or not such grievances can be raised against Ternay and Maillart, the reader will judge for himself from the justifications of the accused. We saw at the beginning of our study that '*pacotille*' [illegal trading], to call it by its name, was as old as the Compagnie des Indes itself; it was an abuse venerable by its antiquity; it does not even seem that the most honest people of the time considered as dishonourable a practice so generally widespread.

1 * A. C. Fonds Madagascar. C5, 5, 6 for the dates indicated. – *Mémoires de Benyowszky*.

We have seen that Dumas, Ternay's predecessor, '*pacotilled*'; Poivre, of virtuous memory, was not spared by slander either. But there is no proof, not even the slightest appearance that Messrs de Ternay and Maillart-Dumesle, before or after the arrival of the baron, attempted the slightest commercial operation. Let us admit, however, that they regretted not having been able to do so, and this would be a beginning of defence for Benyowszky against the attacks of his adversaries. In any case, we must recognise that he never cites facts and that in his complaints, which are generally very lively, he always distinguishes the chevalier de Ternay from the intendant Maillart. He rightly considers that Ternay has always been benevolent towards him, whereas he is implacably relentless against Maillart. If, therefore, the friendly attitude of M. de Ternay was able to disarm the baron, if the latter implicitly recognises his impartiality, since he does not mention his name in the most violent diatribes, we can accept Ternay's testimony with confidence; as for Maillart, the facts will speak for him and his justification will come out of the figures, which is, in truth, in accordance with the nature of things, since we are dealing with an ordinance holder.

We have already seen that Ternay had endeavoured, in 1774, to keep Benyowszky on the Île de France until the end of the wintering period. This was an unequivocal sign of his goodwill. He had communicated to him the reports and maps brought back by the sailors he himself had sent to explore the approaches to Antongil Bay and Vohémar. When he received the Baron's letters announcing his installation at Louisbourg, he wrote to him in the most affectionate and pressing terms to advise him to moderate his plans. In his opinion, Maroce Island, which had always been regarded as the healthiest place on the whole coast, should have been preferred to the swampy spit of land which had been chosen for the first post.

He pointed out that one could not, with the few people at one's disposal, do great things in the beginning. The forces of the Île de France were inferior to an overly ambitious enterprise: the minister recommended economy and there was even a lack of ships to maintain a regular trade with Madagascar. He advised to be satisfied at the beginning with a solid establishment in the region where they had landed, to create alliances in the interior, so as to make the small colony a sort of warehouse for oxen and rice; the following year, they could extend a little more; thus the inhabitants would not be afraid of our enlargements and would become tamed to our trade. He announced the sending of a large number of objects requested by the baron, and asked him to add picks and shovels; but he asked him to leave the storekeeper, in charge of the trading goods, in complete control of the accounts.

In the following August (1774), replying to various letters, he repeated that he saw him struggling to establish a greater number of posts than his forces could allow; he advised him to be wary of the locals despite all their demonstrations of friendship. They should not divide themselves, they should establish only one post. In this way, the natives would respect the French, because they would see them in force, and expenses would be avoided which the mediocre means of the islands could not provide. As Benyowszky claimed to have collected 15,000 tons of rice and 200 oxen, Ternay sent the frigate *Belle-Poule* to Madagascar to bring back what would be available. He also promised to send a small vessel loaded with refreshments, on condition that Benyowszky would not keep it to visit the west coast of the island, as he had expressed the intention to do. He expressly advised him to spare his men during the bad season, not to exhaust them by running and especially not to make them do any earthworks.

It should be noted that these opinions, moreover in conformity with the idea that everyone, except Benyowszky, had formed of the new establishment, in conformity also with the rule of economy which the state of the Treasury imposed, were formulated not as orders but as advice. Ternay did not affect any superiority and the reflections that his experience and knowledge of the country inspired in him had nothing to offend the most shy man. We also see from this correspondence that, from February to August 1774, four ships had been sent to Antongil Bay, loaded with goods and provisions for the new colony. Thus, the administrators of the Île de France had not neglected to help it. It is necessary to insist on this point: the intendant Maillart-Dumesle, from the beginning, was accused by Benyowszky, with the utmost violence, of having put obstacles in the way of the execution of his project and of having shown him enmity. The only reason for these attacks was his justified refusal to issue any money without justification of the expense. It is certain that Maillart, like most of the civil servants on the Île de France, did not approve of the plan which was being put forward by the minister; it is probable that he did not hide this fact and that these conversations reported to the baron irritated his vanity violently. Having received some very acerbic letters from him, Maillart finally replied that he would not send any authorising officer since Benyowszky did not want the one he had appointed and that he would leave him in charge of all the expenses. After these disputes, he cannot be considered a very zealous supporter of the expedition leader, but this does not prove that he was capable of deliberately harming him. Benyowszky thus left with a poor stewardship: he had a simple storekeeper, called Senaut, acting as chief, with him a certain Sieur Pruneau, a trading clerk and a writer called Rollin. But Senaut, already ill at the time of departure, died a few days after arriving in Louisbourg.

Sieur Pruneau had no understanding of the duties he was obliged to perform and the writer Rollin, having only ever served as a sailor, could barely sign his name. The baron later claimed that having established some detached posts, his officers returned to him a quantity of effects which they had confiscated from the administration officers: the latter had taken them from the king's stores and were selling them on their behalf. He then made a visit of the stores, having in hand the state of the goods supplied by the Île de France, in order to recognize the frauds; he found there considerable thefts which the subordinates put at the account of M. Senaut, who, being dead, could not be prosecuted. It was impossible to find out the truth; Benyowszky took the decision to appoint a staff officer to visit the stores every eight days, and forbade the delivery of any goods without an order from him; he thus took responsibility for the entire administration, contrary to the regulations. He understood this so well that he wrote to France to have a commissary, a storekeeper and some employees sent directly to him for this service. However, on hearing of the death of Sieur Senaut, Maillart, as if repenting of having left the disposal of the king's effects to the baron without control, appointed, in August 1774, Sieur la Grive Desassises, a former commissioner of wars, who, it seems, was an intelligent man. The instructions he gave him are dated 15 August 1774. He gave him a copy of all the letters which the minister had written, both to M. de Ternay and to himself, relating to the establishment of Madagascar, and the text of the ordinance of 30 December 1772, which regulated the formation of the volunteer corps.

He recommended to him to conform exactly to the laws, not to let anything be paid by the treasurer, not to let anything be delivered by the storekeeper without his order, to have these two employees keep an exact diary of their receipts and their expenditure. He was to visit the stores assiduously and to control severely the reports of losses and decay. The frigate *Belle-Poule*, which was taking him to Louisbourg, would first disembark him at Foulepointe where he would inspect the troops and all the Frenchmen who were there.

As soon as he arrived at Antongil Bay, he would draw up an inventory of all the king's effects and conduct reviews to find out the situation of the garrison. He would draw up the mortuary extracts of the deceased, collect their wills, if there were any, to inform the families. He would verify the baron's assertions concerning the thefts of which Senaut was accused. Assises would not be subordinate to Benyowszky and would correspond directly with Maillart.

To these general instructions others were attached, quite confidential. Maillart obviously had few illusions about the Baron's sense of order, still less about his docility, and these prescriptions do not presume in him any of those precious qualities common to our officials. In the event that he demanded that expenses be incurred, contrary to the orders, M. Desassises would calmly and moderately make such representations to him as he deemed appropriate; if the commandant resisted, he would reiterate them in writing, and if the commandant persisted after that, he would demand a written order at the bottom of the said representations, and then, would send expeditions of the whole thing to the Île de France. In the event of M. de Benyowszky's death on his arrival, he was to remember that the Baron had made himself surety for the treasurer and that his estate was to be guarantor of the accountant's actions. He should, therefore, affix his own seals to the effects of the estate, notwithstanding any opposition. He would personally avoid all debate and discussion with the baron, and if the facts convinced him that the baron was absolutely unwilling to allow order to be restored, he was authorised to return on the *Belle-Poule*, if that vessel was still there, or if not, by the first vessel that passed into Antongil Bay.

After the death of Assises, this piece fell before the eyes of the baron; he sent a copy to Paris, complaining that it was rather a libel than a service piece.

This well-styled ordinator arrived on 7 October 1774 in the harbour of the Île d'Aiguillon. He went ashore immediately and found a letter from Benyowszky, which urged him to go to the Plain of the Volunteers, his headquarters. The next day he embarked in a pirogue to go up the river, and met the baron himself, who, having learned of the arrival of the *Belle-Poule*, was going to Louisbourg. But, seized with a fever, he had to return with Assises to the Plain. The appearance of this post seems to have made a fairly good impression on the newcomer. It seemed to him that immense work had been done there: but he found the accountants' registers very badly kept, or rather he found that they were not kept at all. Senaut's journal-register had remained completely blank, "without even the belly of an *a*" being seen on it. It was therefore impossible to send the statements that Maillart had requested by the *Belle-Poule*. On the other hand, he gave him information on the establishments made by Benyowszky: the stores had been built in haste and the king's effects were not safe there, the hospitals were in such a bad state that they had to be rebuilt. The island of Aiguillon seemed uninhabitable: it contained only a plain which was almost always submerged, and was continually covered by a thick fog. He himself was housed in the four winds. When it rained, he had difficulty finding a place to work. He was convinced that two thirds of the people who had already died had died because they were not properly sheltered; in the hospital itself, the sick were exposed to the rain and wind; all the buildings in the colony were shacks. He asked for workmen capable of making the necessary repairs, especially as there were so many patients. The tone of Assises' letters, far from being hostile, does not show any prejudice. It is clear that his first impression is not favourable to Benyowszky's administration. Above all, the reports made by Benyowszky on his work and on the perfect healthiness of Louisbourg do not seem justified to him.

The adventure of Assises will provide us with proof of the lack of credibility that Benyowszky's *Memoirs* deserve.

The latter relates that a few days after his arrival, Assises assembled some native chiefs, presented them with a barrel of brandy and assured them that he had come to support them against the governor and to supervise his conduct. This procedure seemed criminal to him on the part of a man who was subordinate to him, but, the insult being personal to him, he contented himself with giving the governor very strong reprimands on the absurdity of his conduct. Some time later, as he had fallen seriously ill, Assises wanted to summon the officers: on their refusal to obey, he went to each of them and told them that he had received orders from Maillart to seize all the baron's belongings, if the latter appeared to be in danger of death. He asked for their assistance in carrying out his mission. The reply of the officers was a threat to make him repent, if he dared to repeat his proposal. The baron, having learnt of his conduct as soon as he had recovered, immediately sent for him and reproached him bitterly. Shocked at seeing his behaviour publicly exposed, he confessed that all his actions were dictated to him by special instructions from his chief. He had to deliver the original to the baron, who had a copy taken and sent it to Paris, calling it a defamatory libel. A few days later, the authorising officer wanted him to sign the report of the losses and thefts which had been noted in the stores; the baron refused, declaring that he was not unaware of the enormous consumption of wine by Assises and his people; as for the thefts, he said that the thieves were too well known to think of taking any action against them. Some time later, Benyowszky had some construction begun in Louisbourg: Assises protested and went so far as to threaten to warn the negroes that he would refuse to pay for their work. This is said to have happened from 1 to 20 November 1774. In December, he is said to have tried to raise the Saphirobays against the colony;

He persuaded them that by revolting against the baron they would be doing something pleasant for the government of the Île de France. "I thought," says Benyowszky, "that it was finally time to take a firm and definitive resolution. I assembled the officers of the corps to whom I explained the fact: after having explained to them the conduct of the Sieur Desassises, I asked them what they thought prudent to do. Their opinion being in agreement with mine, I ordered that he be put under arrest and M. Aumont was charged with replacing him." This happened, it seems, on 19 December. Ten days later, the ordinator publicly confessed that all his words and deeds had been inspired by a faction in the Île de France, whose government was jealous of the prosperity in which the establishment of Madagascar under the baron's command had risen; as for himself, he had only behaved in this way to win the good graces of M. Maillart. This act of repentance earned the culprit his release and Benyowszky let this dangerous man, as he called him, resume his duties. However, according to the *Memoirs*, he only kept them until 8 February 1775, when he was relieved of his duties at his request.

Unfortunately for the narrator, there is not a word of truth in this account. We have the letters exchanged by Benyowszky and the Sieur Desassises from October 1774 to February 1775. There are some from the baron, written from the Plaine-de-Santé, dated 30 September, 5, 10, 15, 18, 24 and 26 October: they are all extremely cordial. He instructs the Assises to buy for his account from Chevalier Grenier, commander of the *Belle-Poule*, two Mozambicans who know how to sound the horn, "because," he says, "his greatest deprivation is not to have music". It seems that he was ill during the month of November: he did not leave the Plain, but this correspondence continued regularly, without the slightest hint of disagreement.

The tone of the baron's letters is always friendly, sometimes familiar, and the responses of the orderly are always deferential and respectful. The latter usually resided at Louisbourg, but he made several trips by pirogue to the Plaine-de-Santé to consult with his chief. To better judge the nature of their relations, we can take a few examples from the baron's letters. From 11 October: "We share, dear Assises, the vegetables. I am sending you a basket: bon appétit." From 13 December: "I am waiting for your tokens and your box to deal you with new cards for 'quinola à la bonne', and I beg you to give M. Ouzeau the voucher for 200 cards as well as yourself the one for 116. I am waiting for you with your new dugout. I have received many letters: a lot of new ones: we will have fun with this for an evening." December 15: "Madame de Benyowszky and her sister are doing well; they are beginning to come back from the prejudices of the Plain and have asked me both to tell you a thousand kind things." From 20 December: "My dear half tells you many things and sends you vegetables... The flour here is so bad that we cannot eat bread. I beg you to send a good quart to the Plain. Farewell, my friend, be well, drink your Champagne wine and do not forget that I had the honour of offering you some of my Grave and Malaga." This letter is dated precisely on the day when, according to the *Memoirs*, Benyowszky was obliged to have the Sieur Desassises put under arrest. It can be seen that, on that day, the baron seemed to be in the best of dispositions with regard to this alleged rebel. Moreover, a later letter four days later tells us that Assises was very ill at that very date and incapable of conspiring, even supposing that he could have had the idea. On the 24th, Benyowszky advised him to go to the Plain: "I would be," he said, "in a position to show you how much I esteem you." Assises' indisposition had no effect; he even recovered quickly enough to send a nice compliment to M. and Mme. de Benyowszky on New Year's Day.

The baron thanked him for this in a letter dated 2 January 1775, wishing them both a happy and healthy year together. There is therefore nothing to retain from the account in the *Memoirs*. Why did Benyowszky slander in this way this man he called his friend, this unfortunate man who, having been unable to provide either the statements or the death certificates requested by Maillart-Dumesle, was recalled by him and died in Madagascar before he even knew of his recall? Here is the reason: in 1786, the baron, seeking to explain his failure, wanted to blame it on Maillart; he accused him of having thwarted him, of having refused him both the goods and the necessary funds. He also wanted to add to his administrative grievances the accusation of alleged plots against his colony at the instigation of this official by agents who were accomplices. Assises could no longer defend himself, Maillart, if he was still alive, did not refute his enemy's book, which was published in France only in 1791.

The enmity of which he is accused did not prevent him from sending aid to the establishment of Madagascar, which, given the scarcity of the islands themselves, was quite considerable. We know from the letters of the Chevalier de Ternay that in 1774 six ships loaded with food and money were sent to the new colony, not counting the *Desforges* and the *Postillon*, which had brought the baron and the volunteer corps: These were the *Grand-Bourbon*, the *Flore*, the *Dauphine*, the *Nécessaire*, the *Belle-Arthur*, and the frigate *Belle-Poule*, on which the Assises were sailing; the *Conqueror* went there in January 1775 and the *Dauphine* returned in January 1776.

We also have the accounting documents for the Île de France addressed to the minister by the intendant, which give details of the men sent, the supplies made and the funds remitted to the account of the Madagascar establishment ¹.

1 * 20 men were sent in August 1774, 30 others in December, and Kerguelen left behind 20.

As for the funds, a first statement, sent on 17 August 1774 and completed on the following 6 September, gave a total of 910,293 livres, not including the navigation costs of the vessels the *Flore*, the *Belle-Arthur*, the *Grand-Bourbon* and the *Belle-Poule*; at the end of September 1775 the sum of 1,112,093 livres had been reached. Bellecombe and Chevreau, according to the notes supplied by Benyowszky himself, arrived in October 1776 at the figure of 1,799,100 l. 11 s. 6 d., value supplied in goods, except 336,416 livres in cash, paid to M. de Benyowszky himself and 315,706 l. 1 s. 6 d., in bills of exchange drawn by him on the treasurer of the Île de France.

There had been an expense of nearly 2 million from February 1774 to October 1776 for about 300 men, of whom only 90 survived by 1775. It should also be noted that the foodstuffs taken on the spot, such as oxen and rice, which, by law, should have been purchased, were probably taken away by force. Benyowszky, as we know, did not count very accurately. He nevertheless opposed these figures with his own: for Maillart had passed him a copy of his statements. He only agreed to recognise 641,458 livres of expenditure as made in the account of the establishment; but the offices of the ministry, which noted the figures in his tables, noticed that he usually subtracted from his expenditure items which should have been part of it; Maillart's figures therefore deserve confidence. In addition, the body and cargo of the corvette *La Sirène*, which was lost in January 1776 at Fort-Dauphin and whose cargo was worth 250,000 livres, could be included in the colony's balance sheet. It does not seem, therefore, that Maillart put too much ill-will into his relations with the baron; it is even surprising that he made so many advances of funds when he received no justification and when Benyowszky stubbornly refused to recognise Ternay's authority and his own. To a letter written by them in Paris to find out whether or not the new establishment should be regarded as independent of the Île de France,

the minister had replied, on 17 July 1775, that Baron de Benyowszky had to maintain correspondence with them, but that he was only obliged to report to the Secretary of State for the Navy and the Colonies. This decision made him de facto independent, and one can understand the embarrassment of an intendant who could be required to provide money and could not exercise any control over its use. It is quite natural that on receipt of this dispatch, Maillart stopped the shipments he had been making to Madagascar until December 1775 and for which no account had been given, contrary to the rule. It was from this date that Benyowszky stopped receiving regular aid. It must be admitted that he himself was responsible for this abandonment. He was notified and the reasons were explained to him. He did not reply. He did not recognise the intendant's complacency. It is known that he had neither transmitted nor allowed any account to be transmitted since his arrival in Louisbourg. Thus, Maillart was able to write to him on 21 June 1775, i.e. about seventeen months after his landing: "I still have no news of the treasurer, of the storekeeper, consequently no account which shows the use of funds and effects and nothing which shows the remainder. Nor do I have a list of the men still in existence, nor a list of the dead, with the time of their deaths, to be used to deliver death certificates to their families. Nor have inventories of the dead been sent, nor any proceeds from their estates. I am, according to that, in the impossibility of noting anything in the details which concern me, more especially as M. Desassises having died, neither his papers, nor his inventory, nor his orders were addressed to me, nor those of M. Senaut, who was some time storekeeper." It is understandable that because of this negligence, Maillart could, without exaggeration, write to the minister that the accounts of the new colony could be considered as those of a ship wrecked and lost body and property.

The request for clarification concerning the funds dependent on the successions opened in Madagascar seems to have irritated the baron a great deal, without it being possible to see why. To a complaint on this subject, which was sent to him during 1775, he only replied on 30 December of the same year. He then declared that he referred to the administration all that concerned the lists of the dead, their successions, sales, inventories, etc., and did not want to hear about it.

The intendant replied that the king's orders put the majors and commanders in charge of everything concerning these matters, and that, consequently, it would be up to him, Benyowszky, to give an account of them. Nor did they agree on the subject of the purchase of cargoes and vessels made by the baron and which Maillart refused to pay for, having neither orders for this nor sufficient funds: "You and I, sir," concluded the intendant, "we have orders; you follow them, we carry out ours, it is up to the minister to pronounce and for us to obey." To this letter, Benyowszky replied on 5 June 1776: "I received on the 17th of last month the letter you did me the honour of writing to me; I beg you to be at peace about the list of the dead, the successions, inventories and sales of military persons, I know my duty and I have fulfilled it; I flatter myself that you will dispense with demanding accounts from me in this respect. For the other matters and disputes of which you speak to me, which surprise me greatly, I beg you to await the minister's orders. Leave these matters, whether alleged or real, alone and support them as far as you are interested. I wish you a good outcome; all I can say is that lies have only a time, and often a very short one. As for the boxes you received, they contained all the papers of any kind that were found after the death of the Sieurs Haumont and Desassises. If they do not give you any clarification, it is proof that you have made a bad choice, and that you have employed thieves, ignoramuses and fools; you will enjoy their works, but these are all matters which do not concern me.

You will therefore do well not to tell me anything about what I should or should not do, not to worry about my conduct any more than I did about yours. With regard to bills of exchange, purchases of cargo, ships, etc., it is not you who will answer for me, so let us pass this synagogue.¹

"You took it upon yourself to inform the minister that, since my arrival in Madagascar, the Île de France had provided me with considerable aid in cash and men. Allow me to tell you that you have imposed this on him, and that it is an atrocious lie, as you yourself know, and that is all."

This language was certainly not in keeping with custom, and it is not surprising that Maillart forwarded this letter, along with a few others in the same style, to the Minister of the Navy. He complained of this animosity, of which he had had signs from the very first days, for having opposed certain measures which he considered to be bad. It is impossible, in fact, to justify the epistolary fury of the baron, and, after the proofs we have of Maillart's correction, it cannot be denied that he did his duty and provided, according to his means, for the subsistence of the colony. One cannot seriously reproach him, any more than M. de Ternay, for not having regularly recruited the corps of Volunteers, for not having renewed their uniform down to the last detail. They had neither men nor resources; Benyowszky wanted to be supplied with the same fabrics and replacement buttons as the old ones. The administrators of the Île de France therefore did their duty faithfully. If they did not do more, it was because they had few resources.

Whether they approved or praised the enterprise is another matter: it is certain that, from the first day, they had a bad feeling about it and that they told the minister without the slightest reticence. From November 1773 onwards, they showed concern about the consequences it might have and the great expense it would entail: but at first it was thought in France that they were unfavourable because of the independence Benyowszky seemed to be allowed.

¹ 'Pass the synagogue' – it is not clear what this phrase means; but the gist is 'let's ignore that and move on...' There is a whiff of antisemitism here, the suggestion of passing by an unpleasant topic.

On 17 June 1774, they sent the first news received from the establishment. A ship, which had left Antongil Bay on 4 March, announced that many people had already been lost and that there was a large number of sick people. By 24 March, 40 troops and 6 officers had died; however, Benyowszky admitted only 7 deaths at that date. He had already had problems with the local people, he had burnt down a village; everything was in great disorder; he made excessive and unjustified demands, for example he wanted a ship that would be at his orders and 12 cannons. Finally, he had placed his camp in a swampy place, where he was exposed to losing all his people. It was at this time that Captain Kerguelen stayed in Antongil Bay, and his testimony confirms that of Messrs de Ternay and Maillart. He stayed there to refresh himself from 20 February to 21 March 1774; he told us that the natives were very hostile to Benyowszky, that in their language they called him the *bad white man* and that they came to shoot at the French in the vicinity of the camp. It had been impossible for him to obtain the slightest help from the baron; he had to procure himself on the coast the oxen he needed for his crews. However, just as he was about to weigh anchor, Benyowszky asked for his help in attacking a fairly well fortified native village, armed with a small cannon, where two chiefs resided, who had come to fire the day before against his entrenchments. Kerguelen agreed to give 80 men, Benyowszky brought 50 who embarked on some local canoes. The village was delivered to the flames, without resistance, by the sailors; the Volunteers did not even have time to go ashore. "They were all," says Kerguelen, "children, rascals, the scrapers of the Pont-Neuf."

On the 10th of August the King's ship, the *Grand Bourbon*, which had left the island on the 4th of July, arrived in the Île de France. On this vessel passed Mme de Benyowszky, her sister Mlle Henska and Mme Cromstowska, whose husband, a captain in the Corps of Volunteers, had just died.

He brought letters from individuals who described the situation of the establishment as very unfavourable. The captain and the surgeon stated that when they left on 3 July, 180 men out of 237 and 12 officers out of 22 were dead; Benyowszky was very ill. As for himself, he said that he was doing well and that he had only lost 49 men. And while he pompously enumerated the quantities of rice accumulated by his care, the captain of the Grand-Bourbon said that he had not even been able to get any for his crossing and that all the stores were empty: however Benyowszky asked for 50 men from the regiment of the Île de France to complete his troop: Ternay did not believe he had to grant them, but he sent surgeons, medicines, wines, brandies, flours and all the help he could on the frigate *Belle-Poule* commanded by Chevalier Grenier, considering the shortage in the Île de France: he recommended to the captain to lend his men only to make huts and stores on the Île Maroce and, in any case, not to leave them to work in the marshy settlement of Louisbourg. In September, they received more news: Benyowszky wrote that he had found a beautiful port between Port Louquès and Cape Amber, and that seven pirogues loaded with amber had paid for all his expenses: "He sent each of us," said the administrators in their report, "a large piece of this so-called amber, which is only a bad gum, and he added that he had sent the king's corvette, the *Postillon*, to France, to inform the minister of this discovery, and this against our advice."

They also found it very bad that he had granted to Sieur Savournin, shipowner and slave trader, the privilege of trade on the west coast of Madagascar, in return for 100,000 livres once paid into the king's coffers in Madagascar, funds which he said he would account for directly in France. This seemed irregular.

As for the aid that Madagascar was to provide to the islands, it was still awaited, although the baron promised thousands of pounds of rice and hundreds of oxen, the figures of which he varied from one letter to another.

Ternay addressed a letter to the Duc d'Aiguillon personally on 6 September 1774 in which he explained his entire conduct with regard to the baron. He recalled that he had begged him not to leave until the end of the bad season, when his first detachment would have been able to build at least a storehouse to cover the food. Nothing had held him back and, as he was independent by virtue of his orders, Ternay had only been able to give him advice which he had not taken into account. Thus he had taken up his position in the most unhealthy and pestilential place on the island, and kept Ternay informed of nothing, supposing no doubt that the latter could not know anything of the losses he had made, because he had forbidden to write and intercepted the letters; but everything was known through private correspondence and through the surgeon of the establishment. The governor complained that he was not trusted; it seemed to him that his way of serving deserved that he was put in the confidence of the mission entrusted to Benyowszky, whereas he did not know the first word of it. As for Maillart, having received neither the lists of the dead, nor the inventories of the estates, nor any account of any kind, he made the complaint to the baron mentioned above, sent a copy to the minister and added: "It will prove to you, Monseigneur, that the disorder which has reigned in Madagascar since the beginning of this establishment, continues and even increases every day. What more can be expected of the operations of a man who establishes despotism as a principle, who disregards laws, customs, and conventions, who, moreover, considers himself independent of the government of the Île de France, who continually takes refuge behind particular instructions given to him in France, who, according to this, considers me as having to blindly accede to all of his requests, without rendering any account to him, and without even tolerating that he should be rendered any account?"

Thus spoke with righteous indignation this intendant who, for eighteen months, had paid 1,200,000 livres and had still been unable to obtain either a receipt or an account of expenditure (9 July 1775). What must he have thought when, in October of that year 1775, he received the minutes of a meeting held by the officers of the corps of Volunteers on the previous 25 September? Present were Baron de Benyowszky, colonel of the corps of Volunteers of his name, general commander of Madagascar, 9 officers, the treasurer Besse. The baron explained that, seeing him ill, the officers had wanted to hold a meeting to know what orders they would have to follow in case of misfortune. He had attended and had made a speech in which, as usual, he had complained about the alleged betrayal of Maillart and the abandonment in which they had been deliberately left. He then withdrew.

What could the officers do when their colonel gave them nothing but complaints and recriminations? They declared themselves penetrated with sorrow on learning that, as a reward for his care and zeal, efforts were being made to tarnish his reputation by impostures and the blackest calumny. They offered to make a common fund to advance to the treasurer. They gave notice, if Benyowszky is to be believed, to send a summons to the Île de France in the name of the king to obtain relief in men, money and goods. And yet the officers must have received personal aid from the ship *Le Conquérant* in the first few days of the month, which the chief acknowledged to Ternay in his letter of 20 October, but of which he does not seem to have said a word to the recipients, since they do not make the slightest reference to it. On the other hand, he did send a copy of the deliberation extorted from his officers to the administrators of the Île de France, accompanied by a personal summons written in violent terms:

"I summon you," he wrote, "in the name of the king, our master, to send to Madagascar a senior officer capable of command, to whom I can entrust the government, while waiting for the court to appoint another... You will also be pleased to send provisions of flour and drink, as well as cloth, rifles, gunpowder and a certain sum for the pay of the troops, with a detachment of 50 soldiers, led by an officer. You will lose the establishment of Madagascar by the slightest delay, and I make you responsible to the king and the minister in the event that you act against my summons."

If one considers that Benyowszky, in his previous letters to Ternay, gave himself out as master of the whole island, enumerating the tributes in rice, slaves and oxen which were paid to him by thousands of subjects, one will agree that the painting of his distress could appear suspicious. The tone in which he spoke was hardly conveying, moreover, speaking to men who, after all, were not subordinate to him.

Ternay, driven to despair, made a copy of these various documents as soon as he received them and sent them to the Duc d'Aiguillon with a letter in which he said: "It would have been desirable, Monseigneur, that you would have explained to me if M. de Benyowszky is absolutely independent of the government of the Île de France, which I very much hope, as the minister has been able to see in my various dispatches. However, the joint letter of 16 October 1774, which *tells us to give orders to Madagascar* so that Sieur Bourdé de la Villehuet is not worried, seems to announce a dependence. It is this same letter and this order which you gave me which have so strongly constrained M. de Benyowszky. I did not give him orders, I passed him yours, and I beg him today to put an end to his literary correspondence in which I see nothing but bitterness. You have seen mine, I think you will have seen nothing but kindness and a determined desire to see his projects succeed. The advice I gave him, not orders, was dictated by this motive alone.

The imperious summons he makes to the government of the Île de France would almost make me doubt whether he does not also believe himself to be the commander of these islands. I do not know, Monseigneur, what orders have been given to Baron de Benyowszky, who is at present at war with the blacks in the vicinity of Antongil Bay. If I am to refer to the joint letter of 19 March 1773, no. 65, there was only one question of an establishment, by means of which one would have obtained, with trade goods, rice and cattle from the inhabitants of the country, who would have become accustomed to seeing the French established in their homes. If this is the plan, M. de Benyowszky has more than enough people to maintain himself there, despite all the blacks who might attack him. According to his own calculation, he must have 212 men. If, on the other hand, he has orders to subdue the whole island of Madagascar, as I have reported to you, by sending you an extract from his letters, the 50 men which he asks for in the Île de France, and of which half would be dead six weeks after their arrival, would not be sufficient, by a long shot, for such a conquest. I await your orders before making a shipment of this kind, at least as considerable. I will send the King's corvette, the *Dauphine*, within eight days. M. Maillart will send clothing with trading goods and other provisions. I will send a thousand powder for the service of the troops, and M. le chevalier de Tromelin will remain, until the end of January (1776), in the bay of Antongil, to assist M. le baron de Benyowszky in the defence of his main post, if it is attacked. The present hostilities of the blacks of Madagascar are contradictory to the last letters of M. le baron de Benyowszky, who announced that the whole island from Fort-Dauphin to Cape Amber was subject and dependent on the French government. This commander must have given you an account of this. I make this observation to you without any bile, and I desire that all that the court has hoped for from this establishment may be realised.

I leave it to the public voice to decide what the minister wishes to say. I would only point out to him that it is to be desired that the orders given by the court be so clear that no one can interpret them. I enclose herewith the general list of persons who have passed through Madagascar. You will be able to judge the mortality by the admission of M. de Benyowszky himself, who admits 124 deaths, from which I summarize that he must still have with him 212 whites and 23 blacks who left the Île de France. But all the calculations I could make would still be very uncertain and my opinion will be the same at all times, that is to say that I have seen so many contradictions in the various letters of M. de Benyowszky that I cannot add credence to all the pathos of his situation, especially if one judges by the immensity of the shipments made to him. His speech, together with the summons of a whole body that I do not know, seems to me a real theatre scene and it is useless to comment on it."

In reality, Benyowszky, who on 20 September 1774 had 150 men in all, including officers, had only 119 in January 1775, 92 in September and 91 on 1 January 1776. All this is shown in statements signed by his own hand.

Captain Bourdé, commander of the private ship the *Salomon*, who was in Madagascar in 1775, gives us a testimony in support of Ternay's statements. He says nothing positive about the present state of the chief town that M. de Benyowszky had formed in the bay of Antongil and named Louisbourg. He only knows that it is the unhealthiest place in Madagascar. He himself had arrived at Foulepointe on 9 July 1775, at night. On the morning of the 10th, he had sent an officer ashore to deliver to M. de la Boullaye, an officer of the Benyowszky Volunteers, the packages which M. de Ternay had entrusted to him for the baron. La Boullaye returned on board with the officer and dined there, agreeing in conversation that the establishment was expensive for the State, useless in itself and harmful to trade, not to mention that the bad season took away most of the men:

"We were able to judge," says Bourdé, "of the truth of this last fact by the appearance of the 13 soldiers, the commander and the surgeon, who looked more like walking mummies than living men. It was the whole garrison of a wicked square stockade which is called the French fort, and which, in truth, is only a Negro hovel, without strength or defence, since it is formed only by piles 4 to 6 inches in diameter and 7 to 8 feet high above the ground, into which they are driven about 2 feet, touching each other. This surrounding of palisades contains the hut where the officer is housed, a store in the fashion of the country and some other huts where the soldiers are housed. This is all that could be noticed during the short time we were in Foulepointe, where we were forbidden to do any kind of business. On the 19th of August, adds Bourdé, I received a letter from Baron de Benyowszky, with permission to trade in rice along the whole coast and a ban on trading in blacks. Also my officers were unable to fill their port permits, although all the baron's people offer slaves, but at such a high price that none are bought. However, two officers of the ship bought some for servants at 55 piastres, one with M. de la Boullaye, the other with an interpreter named la Broche. If we had wanted several slaves at this price, we could have obtained them, despite the prohibitions, since they seem to be made only for traders and the people of the colony are exempt from them. On the island of Sainte-Marie, there is neither an establishment nor a post on the part of the Governor General of the island of Dauphine. I had recourse to M. de Benyowszky to obtain for me what he had of rice in store at his fort Saint- Maurice, at Angontsy, which he decided to sell me 1 ½ piastre per cent, and he had 74,365 livres delivered to me at that price, in accordance with the receipt of his officer, M. Diard.

"Fort Saint-Maurice consists of a stockade similar to that of Foulepointe.

This entourage of piles has more than the first two turrets, at the two corners of the sea front, and the gate of the fort which is in the middle of the curtain wall is covered by a small horseshoe of palisades 4 feet high. The whole garrison of this weak fort consists of 1 officer and 1 volunteer, with 6 or 8 blacks, interpreters. It was reduced at my departure to one man, named Décolle, interpreter.

"One can raise such a fortification, with its buildings, for the value of 400 to 500 piastres by employing only the people of the country, to make it because there are only stakes to be planted without having earth to move and the wood is under the hand of the workers. I would observe to you, sir, that when trade enjoyed the freedom it deserves, private vessels took away a lot of rice and slaves which were imported into our islands of France and Bourbon. Today, no commercial vessel dares to obtain this advantage, since the rice trade would be interrupted by the continuous wars which have been going on there since the presence of our troops, whose number is however very small, because, according to what was told to me by the Sieurs Diard, la Broche and Dupuis, the whole does not go to 150 white men, all included, of which the majority are exhausted by the bad weather, without excluding the baron himself, and whose number will probably still decrease, during the bad season which starts. The rice harvests are much less and there is a shortage of food from Tamatave to Rée Point."

This was the account of an eyewitness in mid-1775.

It can be seen that with such testimonies, which cannot be questioned when they relate to specific and precise points, it was difficult for Ternay and Maillart to have a good opinion of Benyowszky's exploits and veracity.

The offices further away were slower to be convinced and did not easily admit that they could have made a mistake in their choice.

CHAPTER VI

M. de Sartine orders an investigation, 1776 - Report by MM. de Bellecombe, Chevreau and de la Pérouse: Benyowszky has done nothing of what he claims, and has spent two million ¹.

M. de Boynes, who had organised, so to speak, Benyowszky's expedition, had been replaced on 19 July 1774 by Turgot, who remained at the Navy until 24 August of the same year. He moved to the *Contrôle Général*, leaving his post to the former lieutenant of police, M. de Sartine, who kept it until 1780: at that date, the latter was succeeded by the Marquis de Castries.

As soon as he took office, Turgot was aware of the letters from Maillart, Benyowszky and Ternay dated at the end of December 1773; we have seen that he replied immediately. The minutes of the letters are from July and August 1774. But it is certain that they were not dispatched, although the firmness of the tone and style indicates that they were written or at least touched up by the minister. If they had been, Benyowszky's enterprise would have been contained, from the end of 1774, within the limits from which it was not to leave. Turgot, in fact, approved of Maillart for having refused the baron the funds which the latter demanded from him to raise a company of hunters, but he blamed him for having suffered him to leave without an authorising officer. He expressly recommended to him to repair this fault and not to suffer the baron to meddle in anything with the expenses and the stores.

1 * A. C. Fonds Madagascar, C5, 6, 7 for the dates indicated. – *Mémoires de Benyowszky*.

To Ternay and Maillart, he explained with the utmost precision, in a joint letter, that the aim of the new enterprise was to remedy the high cost of oxen and slaves caused by the freedom of trade, the competition of captains and the abuse of paying the natives in piastres. He confirmed that the expedition had no other object than the foundation of a simple post, that the chief was subject to their authority, that if Benyowszky claimed to conquer the island and found a colony there, in order to be the terror of Asia, this was a departure from his mission, and that it was necessary to stick to the government's plan. It was up to them to force Benyowszky to do so.

It is impossible for these letters to have been signed and to have fallen into disuse; Turgot would have left the task of signing them to his successor; this would not be surprising, for if the minutes are dated August, the dispatches were only written around the time when the ships left, that is to say in October.

In any case, it is absolutely certain that they were not sent; perhaps they were never seen by Sartine. Neither he nor anyone else makes the slightest reference to them. We must assume that these dispatches lay dormant in some drawer from which they were unearthed in the 19th century, when the Madagascar file was formed in the archives of the Navy.

M. de Sartine seems to have known the affair only through the letters of Benyowszky, Ternay and Maillart. Benyowszky sent, on 1 September 1774, the cutter *Le Postillon*, with his reports up to that date. His correspondence and that of the administrators were summarised very accurately, as is easy to see, for the instruction of the minister. The employee who did this work, who must have been Auda, the first clerk, or Dubuq, the head of the office, followed, when necessary, the most significant letters with a few remarks which testify to a disposition more favourable to Benyowszky than to his adversaries. Thus, to the letter in which, on 17 June 1774, Ternay gave bad news of the establishment, this note is attached:

"It is to be feared that the independence in which M. de Benyowszky finds himself from the commandant of the Île de France, as well as from the intendant, will have a great influence on the opinion which these two chiefs seem to have of the establishment."

This note, made directly for the minister and undoubtedly coming from one of the department's main clerks, seems rather strange. How can this man assert Benyowszky's autonomy as an indisputable fact? How can he accuse the governor and the intendant of jealousy, when he must, by his very functions, have been aware of the letters written or at least approved by Turgot? Had he not known about them at the time they were written, they certainly existed in the file of the affair, then in hand. Are we to believe that the annotator ignored them? Did he not conceal them out of friendship for Benyowszky? If so, this would explain the uncertainty in which Sartine was left about the arrangements made by his predecessor. When he later sent investigating commissioners, he himself admitted that he knew nothing about the case. The note we have just mentioned was written in the early months of 1775, for it states that Saunier, commander of the *Postillon*, had arrived from Madagascar, and it is known that the ships which left the islands in September reached Lorient in mid-January. It allows us to infer that Benyowszky had a friend in the ministry who took advantage of Turgot's departure to prevent the execution of his decisions.

Other notes in the same hand highlight the contradictions between the Baron's letters and those of Ternay and indicate that the testimony of Captain Saunier was called upon, probably to invalidate the latter. It is likely that he must have given favourable information on an enterprise in which he was involved and which, moreover, at the time (1774) when he left Louisbourg, was far from hopeless. These letters from Ternay and Maillart, which it was a question of neutralising, dated June 1774, had left by the *Carnate* in July.

They announced losses of men, but in sum nothing too serious, and one could without bad faith suppose in their pessimism a little bad temper. On the other hand, Benyowszky's letters, three months later, announced the foundation of Louisbourg, several other posts, and Mayeur's expedition to Bombetok. We have seen these accounts above. Could one suspect that there was nothing true in these reports and that a man honoured with the confidence of two ministers was capable of lying with such impudence? If one admits, which is certain for us, that Sartine had no knowledge of Turgot's letters, whether or not they were concealed from him, one will recognise that it was quite natural to give credit to this Benyowszky, supported by friends who were perhaps influential, and almost illustrated by his astonishing escape, especially as he could be thought to be the object of petty jealousies. Such seems to have been the feeling of M. de Sartine.

He therefore remained insensitive to a rather harsh attack directed against the baron around this time. M. de Lessart, who was later to become Minister of Foreign Affairs, then "master of requests" [*maître des requêtes*'] of the council, presented him with a memorandum by the engineer Cossigny on the establishments to be created on the island of Madagascar. De Lessart had no personal ideas on the subject; so one must think that he exposed those of Cossigny and perhaps in the very form that the latter gave them in conversation. Nothing was more legitimate than to warn Sartine of the bad chances of the new enterprise. It could be said that it would not succeed unless it was combined according to the most exact notions; it was certain that up to then one had only a very imperfect knowledge of this country, but one finds the style of the unsociable and jealous Cossigny in the following lines: "Would M. de Benyowszky have learnt all of a sudden what has been unknown for so long? Can we trust his connections and advice to a certain extent?"

I have heard that he is a charlatan, and I have strong reason to believe it, and besides, can one hope that a Hungarian colonel, escaped from Kamtchatka by a courageous but ferocious action, will bring to Madagascar very gentle morals and a peaceful administration? One must especially fear to commit oneself on the faith of an adventurer who, having had no other profession than to command light troops and brigands, knows neither the principles of civil government, nor the true object of the establishment which one wants to make in Madagascar."

One cannot help but find, in spite of the excessive germs, these reflections rather judicious and these conjectures almost prophetic, either from Cossigny personally, or from him or from Lessart, who had borrowed them from some correspondent in the islands. But it was not possible for Sartine to recall Benyowszky or to deny him his confidence on the basis of the evidence he then had before him. Neither Ternay nor Maillart had called the baron a charlatan, but only a reckless man. One could be surprised to hear him tell so many marvels, but he was not the first adventurer who had succeeded against the laws of wisdom and in spite of the regulations. In order not to believe his stories, in order not to give him credit, it would have been necessary for Sartine to have had a knowledge of the character that no one in France could have had, and that few people acquired by experience, during the lifetime of this prestigious liar, so much so that he always knew how to impose himself even on the men who were most prejudiced against him.

It was in order to obey the average reason, the bureaucratic reason, that Sartine, in the presence of the splendid results announced by Benyowszky, ignored the objections which seemed to fall in the face of undeniable success. He believed in him and his achievements and took important decisions in his favour in May 1775.

A draft letter-patent was then drawn up, according to which a provisional council was to be formed in Madagascar, consisting of the commandant, the executive officer, the store-keeper, the major of the *Volontaires* and three employees or inhabitants, to render justice both to the French and to the natives established in the colony. Other letters, one month later, forbade all trade between the islands and Madagascar, except with the permission of the general commander; the vessels which would be sent from the islands by the administrators to look for foodstuffs, would be addressed to the commander of Madagascar who would provide their load or authorize them, if necessary, to complete it elsewhere. Benyowszky was allowed, by a special order, to complete each of his three companies of volunteers with 103 men; he was warned that 100 recruits were to be sent to him; he was authorized to maintain the two companies of Malagasy janissaries which he claimed to have created; he was thought to be able to assimilate them to the *sepoys* of India: he was not sent any artillerymen, but he was committed to forming provisionally, with 30 volunteers, an officer and a sergeant, a company which would act as a substitute for them for some time. Finally, he was given provisions of a *commander for the king in Madagascar and the small adjacent islands* to command under the immediate authority of the king, both the French soldiers and traders and the tributary natives. Instructions were sent to him explicitly approving his establishments at Louisbourg, the *Plaine de la Santé* and on the way to Bombetok. It was added that, in view of the difficulties with which he had had to contend, His Majesty had not wished to examine strictly how far he had departed from the ordinances, but that he could not expect the same indulgence for the future. He was told that an authorising officer and a controller had been appointed, with whom he was to consult. He was advised to maintain the most perfect understanding with them. It was expressly declared that his administration was completely independent of that of the *Île de France*, subject to the inevitable relations between the two colonies for exchanges, supplies of goods and provisions, the accounts of which were to be kept accurately and sent to France every six months.

On 17 July 1775, a joint letter addressed to Messrs De Ternay and Maillart informed them that Benyowszky was authorised to correspond directly with the minister, which made him in practice independent. This letter announced new orders, but without indicating their meaning. A special dispatch to Maillart dated 30 September warned him that the administrative officers for Madagascar would be chosen in France. Thus, at this date, the dispositions favourable to Benyowszky persisted in the offices of the Ministry.

The baron, for his part, acknowledged receipt on 2 June 1776 of a letter from France dated 17 July 1775, received only in duplicate on 28 May 1776; probably the first expedition had perished with the *Sirène* in January off Fort-Dauphin. It was through this letter that he learned of the instructions just analysed. He told of his new successes, and claimed that the chiefs of the whole island came to have all their disputes judged by him as a last resort, and that he spent three hours a day in these trials. He also confirmed the occupation of 8 posts, complained about Maillart and, no longer counting on the corvette *La Sirène* whose delay was too significant, he declared that he was impatiently awaiting the ships whose departure from France was announced by the minister for the end of 1775, and which would bring him the King's final orders. He also admitted incidentally that he had had some negroes sold at the Cape of Good Hope to pay for the shipping costs of the *Postillon*: this was no doubt not the only reason. But the correspondence which left the Île de France in July and August 1775, and which only reached France towards the end of the year, decided Sartine to have an enquiry made. At that moment, the friend that the baron had in the offices proposed to the minister to let his genius run free, to provide him with 1 million and 600 colonists. Sartine hesitated and was right. For the letters received at the end of 1775 were particularly precious and serious; we also had in our hands the correspondence of Assises with Maillart;

Now, if one could look with some indulgence at Benyowszky's first errors, the persistence of his negligence, the contradiction noted between his statements and those of the other witnesses had to excite distrust. According to the opinions of the Île de France, disorder reigned in Madagascar, the expenses were enormous and the colonists succumbed to the bad weather. On the other hand, the reports of the baron, with a quiet audacity, gave the most flattering hopes: "In the uncertainty to which one felt reduced", says M. de Sartine, "there really remained no other course of action for me to take than to send enlightened inspectors and to wait until they had given me a faithful account of the establishment. To this end, I took advantage of the departure of the new administrators who were going to India; I gave them the necessary instructions and orders to see and examine everything."

By a decision of 10 February 1776, Sieur de Bellecombe, brigadier of the king's armies, and Sieur Chevreau, Commissioner General of the Navy, both appointed to go to the Indies to replace Law de Lauriston, were ordered to inspect the various French colonies, and especially Madagascar, on their way. Particular letters, dated 18 February, to be given to each of the governors, accredited them to them. The one addressed to Benyowszky indicated that he would be under their orders for the duration of their stay, that he should give them all the information they needed and that their report would have a great influence on the decision that was to be taken concerning his establishment. Bellecombe and Chevreau left Port-Louis on 26 March 1776. Arriving at Gorée on 12 April, they stayed there until the 19th to inspect the colony, and, setting sail again, they anchored on 15 June at False-Bay; leaving on 5 July, they reached the Île de France on 10 August, where they made their mission known. After visiting Bourbon, the frigate *Consolante*, escorted by the 'pale'¹ *Iphigénie*, commanded by the Chevalier de la Pérouse, led them to Madagascar. The two ships touched down at Tamatave and Foulepointe before going to Antongil Bay.

1 The *Iphigénie* was the first of a special class of frigate, known – in French – as a 'pale'...

They landed at Tamatave on 16 September and the commissioners went ashore immediately. "Our first move," they wrote in their report, "was to walk through this beautiful country and to go around the Tamatave peninsula; we then returned to the village, where we found most of the huts empty and entirely deserted. About thirty Negroes and Negresses were still living there, engaged only in fishing. They were questioned and some information was obtained from them as to what the baron had done in these parts. The baron had never been there, although his reputation was known. The only thing they had seen was an employee named Rolin, who had come to deal in food for the garrison of Foulepointe, but who had recently left. Trade had almost entirely ceased, to the great displeasure of the local people, who declared themselves willing to receive the French well and to trade with them during the fine season."

After having taken some information on the neighbouring tribes and on the trade of the country, Bellecombe and Chevreau went to Foulepointe. Having arrived early on 18 September, they spent the end of the day inspecting the French post. There was a garrison of 14 volunteers, commanded by Chevalier de Sanglier, the only officer in service since the creation of the corps who had withstood the climate and the fatigue. There was also a storekeeper, a clerk, a surgeon and an interpreter.

They went through all the outbuildings enclosed in the palisade: it was a square enclosure of 30 toises on each side, but it was easy to see that nothing was newly built. There was only one stone building, 40 feet long and 20 feet wide: all this had been built in the days of the India Company and was now in a very bad state.

In the middle of the palisade there were seven cannon, three of which were 6s, two 4s and two *pierriers* borrowed from some ship, as could be seen from the gun carriages. On leaving the stockade, the commissioners met King Hiavy, whose dwelling was not far away. He was wrapped in a simple loincloth and was sitting on the front of his house, in the midst of ten or twelve of his slaves. He did not seem worthy of his reputation, for he was considered the most powerful chief on the island. He was a young man of about 26 years of age, of medium height and rather slim figure: it was said that he was master of 60 to 80 leagues of coastline by 10 to 12 deep, and that he had under his authority 60 chiefs capable of bringing to him, in case of necessity, from 25 to 30,000 men. He belonged to the nation of the Betsimirakas. The commissioners, continuing their inspection, found that the king's effects were as poorly protected from rats as from thieves. They had M. Coquereau, designated to be the orderly in Madagascar, give them the situation reports and saw, not without amazement, that the gunpowder was placed in a wooden storehouse, among all kinds of goods. King Hiavy having come, that day, to visit the commissioners, complained to them that trade had almost ceased and asked them to re-establish it: to which the French chiefs replied with good words and a present of 12 bottles of brandy. La Pérouse seems to have had an even more unfavourable impression than Messrs de Bellecombe and Chevreau. He states in his report that the population of Foulepointe is reduced by half, that the war and the cessation of trade had destroyed agriculture.

"There was not," he said, "300 pounds of rice in the king's stockade, and not a bowl of it could be found in the village; the blacks live on roots and wild fruits, and I had seen three years before ten vessels loaded with rice in the anchorage of Foulepointe." He too judged that the palisade was in ruins; the stone building no longer had a roof and the powder was in a straw hut placed in the lee of the kitchen.

The men of the post had all seemed to him to be ill and did not have the strength to drag the enormous sabre with which they were armed. On 19 September, the *Consolante* and the *Iphigénie* left for Antongil Bay, where the frigate anchored the next day, the paddle only on the 21st. At 9 o'clock in the morning, the commissioners disembarked; after they had exchanged visits and compliments with the baron, the latter had the very small number of soldiers still living in Louisbourg assembled, ordered a ban to be beaten, and had Bellecombe and Chevreau recognized as inspectors and commissioners for the king in Madagascar. After this ceremony, the three of them went to the palisades which were called the fort. They examined it with attention, as well as the artillery which was mounted there, visited the barracks, which contained 20 men and 2 small stores squeezed into this kind of fortification; one contained the effects of the troops, the other 40 to 50 barrels of gunpowder as exposed to a total blaze as that of Foulepointe. They then handed the baron a book of requests, observations and questions, forming 25 articles in all, which he read immediately and to which he showed himself willing to reply. The next day, 22 September, M. Chevreau visited the four straw huts which were called stores: the few goods they contained were in the most terrible disorder and in the worst condition. There was not a grain of rice in the establishment: the 40 or 50 slaves there were forced to be fed with white bread. The straw huts were so poorly built and so badly sealed that the rain penetrated them and rats swarmed. The commissioners immediately ordered the treasurer, Sieur Besse, to draw up a general inventory so that a report could be made. They did not want to tackle the accounting matters straight away, seeing what confusion reigned everywhere and knowing that the cash register was empty.

As for the location of Louisbourg, it seemed to them that Benyowszky had only considered the needs of a war post, since he had placed himself in a sort of marsh formed by the sandy peninsula located between the Tinguebale River and Port-Choiseul. He had only been able to protect himself from the water, which overflowed during high tides, by gradually filling in some shallows on which he had then built the 30 to 40 wooden huts and houses: that was the whole town. There were so many shallows left that the expense of filling them in would be exorbitant and would certainly result in a lot of loss of men. Benyowszky himself said that if the court did not want to maintain a corps of 600 men in Madagascar and spend 2 million tournaments per year, *it was necessary to hurry up and pack up*. La Pérouse, in his report, evaluated the width of the peninsula at 300 toises, the filled part at about 100 square toises: the remainder was covered with water at high tides, because the ground only dominated the river and the sea by about 4 feet. Fort Louis was 9 toises long by 12 wide; its 3 bastions, 3 toises by 2 1/2. In each bastion was a cannon whose muzzle appeared at an open port in the palisade. The stakes simply driven into the sand protruded from it about 4 feet. There was a second enclosure, about 18 feet from the first, from which the stakes also protruded 4 feet. Between the two enclosures, at the foot of the first enclosure, was a sand bank of about 3 feet which could be called a glacis. All the palisades were rotten with humidity, and the value of this fort, when it was new, could not have been more than 100 pistols, since 50 stakes only cost one rifle. There may have been 1,000 or 1,200 days of volunteers to prepare the ground. In the interior of the fort were buildings in palisades, covered in straw, much like the slaves' huts on the Île de France; they were: a dwelling for 2 officers, 21 feet long and 10 feet wide, a storehouse 28 feet by 10 feet, barracks for 25 men 40 feet by 7 feet, a guardhouse 10 feet by 7 feet, a powder magazine in lath, covered in straw.

The wood of these buildings was rotten. Their cost price could be 50 rifles, which, at 15 livres each, made 750 livres. The total cost of the fort and the buildings, including the 1,200 volunteer days at 10 sols, was 2,350 livres.

Forty toises west of the fort was the governor's residence; it was a single-storey house, built of squared timbers, roofed with straw, planked inside, panelled with mats, and capped with canvas. It was about 60 feet long and 22 feet wide and was divided into three rooms: the middle one was a common room; on the left was Mme. de Benyowszky's room, and on the right another room divided into two. On one side was Mlle. Henska, sister of the baroness; the other was a sort of office which served as a study for the baron during the stay of Messrs. de Bellecombe and Chevreau. To the right of the house was a pavilion of the same height as the main hut, 20 feet square, also built of squared timbers, planked, panelled with mats and covered with straw, and having a small chimney; this made only one room which served as a study for M. de Benyowszky, and where Bellecombe and Chevreau slept. To the left was a pavilion begun, of the same size as the preceding one, but divided into two rooms and covered with shingles sent from the Île de France. In front was a kitchen made of tree trunks like the rest, and opposite the main building, about 10 toises away, was a shed supported by poles and covered in straw, where some workmen were working. To the east of this shed were two small streets about 30 toises long, bordered on both sides by huts or straw huts, about 12 feet high, not counting the roof; these were the lodgings of the officers and employees and the king's stores. On the tip of the peninsula, on the seaward side, was the hospital, which was falling into ruin; Bellecombe and Chevreau decided to move it a league and a half inland.

The cost of the various buildings at Louisbourg, including the fort, could be estimated at 25,000 livres, but with the exception of the governor's residence everything had to be rebuilt. All the wood of the palisades was rotten; one could not dig 2 feet deep without finding water.

On 24 September, Bellecombe and Chevreau took a census of the effects contained in the stores or boxes so called. Sieur Besse, treasurer and storekeeper, claimed that both at Louisbourg and at Angontsy, there could be 100,000 livres worth of goods left. But they learned with amazement that, since the beginning of 1776, this treasurer had drawn on the treasurer general of the colonies in Paris for 315,705 l. 1 s. 6 d. of bills of exchange, without being authorized to do so. They judged that if the baron could be a very good and very brave soldier, he was at the same time a very formidable administrator. Having then made an examination of the treasurer's registers, he admitted ingenuously that he knew nothing about this part, nor about that of the storekeeper; they then understood that they should not expect to find anything resembling accounts. Besse had found himself in charge of the store after the death of Sieur Aumont in November 1775, who had himself taken the place of Assises; he was not in a position to give an account of his management. The death of all the employees sent to Madagascar had caused the promotion of this strange civil servant, who had been four or five years before a coachman in the service of M. Monistrol, director of the post office in Lorient. On Benyowszky's presentation and guarantee, Maillart had agreed to appoint him to this post, where he was left for want of a better one, until the arrival of a capable employee. Finally, on 27 September, at 8 o'clock in the morning, the commissioners, continuing the inspection of the posts, left in a pirogue with Benyowszky and the lieutenant of the vessel, La Pérouse. They were escorted by another pirogue carrying a small detachment of Volunteers.

Between noon and one o'clock they arrived at the post called Fort St. John. The river, from 150 to 180 toises wide, began to be incised at one league from Louisbourg, between high banks of 15 to 18 feet. Further on, the country was very open and the river for a space of about ten leagues crossed a beautiful sandy plain covered with tall grass, banana trees, shrubs and clumps of wood. There were, in the current, many islands, all green, and of the most pleasant aspect. Fort St. Jean, situated 3 leagues from Louisbourg, was only a small surround of piles with a ditch of 4 to 5 feet furnished with 2 small pieces of artillery of one pound of bullets, but it was in bad condition, and, indeed, in need of renewal. Seven or eight huts in the local style provided accommodation for the two officers, nine volunteers and a few free Negroes attached to the establishment. The situation of the post would have been very pleasant, for beyond the wide plains, hills and small mountains, if there had not been a swamp a hundred steps from the fort. All was still in the state of nature, except for some land formerly cleared by the natives. The soldiers at the post, though they looked almost as ill as those at Louisbourg, declared that they were better off there, and the commissioners ordered the hospital to be transferred there. At 3 o'clock in the afternoon they set out again. They made another two or three leagues on the river, through the most beautiful country in the world. From time to time they came across villages of natives: but they seemed to be little inhabited, to the great astonishment of the inspectors. At about 5 o'clock in the evening, the dugout canoes entered a sort of mountainous gorge about a league long and reached the Plaine de Santé at about 7 o'clock. As daylight was beginning to fall, the commissioners were content to walk through the gardens and the small clearings which the baron had had made when he was staying there. They were pleased to see that the coffee and crops of the Île de France were doing well there, but it seemed to them that the climate must be as dangerous as in Louisbourg.

Indeed, the main house, which was only a wooden building 64 feet long and 30 feet wide, covered with shingles, was placed on the edge of the river and at the foot of a round mountain in the shape of a sugar loaf, on the top of which the baron had built a fort which he called Fort Augusta. All this part of the river and the mountain itself were surrounded by higher mountains, which were separated from each other only by very narrow gorges and valleys, so that the rains accumulated a great quantity of water there. This humidity, together with the fog of the river, made the place unhealthy and dangerous. The military position was no better, for it did not seem possible, without a considerable number of soldiers, to guard the gorges which, through the mountains, allowed access to the settlement. The commissioners proceeded the next day to the foot of Fort Augustus, as soon as the sun had begun to dissipate the very thick fog which rises from the river. The summit of the mountain was reached by a small steep path, where steps had been made. "It was," says La Pérouse, "a fort from which one could only shoot at crows. Enemies could have established themselves at the foot without having to fear either cannon or rifle fire and would have reduced to death from hunger and thirst those who were foolish enough to have perched themselves on top." The fort was, like Fort Saint-Jean, a square of half-rotten palisades 50 feet long on each side. There were 3 huts in this kind of fortification, which served as living quarters for the 10 volunteers who formed the entire guard of the establishment. The artillery, placed in such a way as to machine-gun the birds, consisted of 4 pieces of 3.

It was from this height that the commissioners were finally able to see the much-vaunted plain of La Santé, of which Benyowszky spoke in his correspondence as an enchanting place, and whose plans transmitted by him to France bore the image of numerous houses, public buildings, such as forts, stores and hospitals, and the indication of vast crops.

The commissioners saw the plain in front of the fort along the left bank of the river: but they saw only two abandoned huts which had been used as a hospital and barracks and seven or eight huts in the most sorry state. "As for the new town mentioned in the instructions of the commissioners and which M. de Bellecombe had been crying out for since his landing, we looked for it on all sides," said la Pérouse, "and we saw no trace of it, not even a village intended for the blacks. The aspect of this plain really offers only a desert which laborious hands would certainly make very fertile, since it is still watered by a small river which flows into the Tanguébale. This river is navigable and would carry flat boats from its mouth to 15 or 16 leagues inland. The whole of the land it runs through seemed to us very suitable for the cultivation of rice and corn and has already been developed here and there by the local people. We were assured that before the establishment of M. de Benyowszky there were more than 40 villages on the banks going up from Louisbourg to the plain of Santé; but the war which has reigned in the bay of Antongil, since the arrival of this commander, has dispersed and distanced them, and it is for this reason that this magnificent country remains without cultivation and that the few islanders who now inhabit the banks of this river, as well as all the parts of the bay of Antongil, are reduced to living only on bananas. M. de Benyowszky assured us that, since the peace made about four months ago, he had begun to give concessions to the local people and that they were gradually returning."

The baron had been prevented by his condition from accompanying the commissioners to Fort Auguste; on their return to him, they asked him if there were any other posts to be visited in the vicinity of the Plaine de Santé, or in the interior, and if he had established communication routes from east to west as far as Bombetok.

He replied that he had, some time ago, two advanced posts; but that he had been obliged to recall them to reinforce his garrison, which had been considerably weakened by the losses he had suffered; as for the road from east to west, it had indeed been started, but the work had been forced to be stopped because of the opposition of the local people. What were they to make of the reports attributed to Mayeur by the baron, which told of successful negotiations with the king of Bombetok and the chief of Boma? Benyowszky had invented the journey, the reports and the treaties.

"As for the road to Bombetok," said a Pérouse, "I have ascertained that at no time had it been traced, that no European had made it; and M. de Benyowszky having ordered the man named Mayeur, his interpreter, to go and trade in oxen, this man took his way by the north to the sea, and then went to the coast. de Benyowszky having ordered the man named Mayeur, his interpreter, to go and trade oxen on the west coast, this man took his way by the north to the edge of the sea, and advanced by this way to 12 leagues from Bombetok, from where he returned with a herd of 158 oxen to the bay of Antongil."

We also have the most authentic testimony on this subject, which is a letter from Mayeur himself, addressed to Bellecombe, on 30 September 1776:

"My general," he said, "after the order you gave me, I made a collection of the little knowledge I have of the country after nine years that I have remained there. At the time of the arrival of M. Baron de Benyowszky, the natives of the country imagined that His Majesty had sent him to this country to seize their lands, women, children and goods: in spite of all that we have been able to tell them, they are still in the same persuasion and have only attempted to kill M. de Benyowszky and murdered the whites of the establishment for this reason."

In this letter, Mayeur makes no reference to a treaty of alliance with the natives, quite the contrary.

His diary, the analysis of which has been published by M. Grandidier, gives an even clearer picture of the truth of this alleged submission by the people of Boueni and Bombetok. It appears from this account that he was stopped by the Sakalaves at a fairly large distance from Bombetok and forced to retreat. He nearly perished in the ambushes they set for him and returned without having succeeded in his plan. He left in November 1774, and headed north along the coast. He reached the mouth of the Nodo River in latitude 12°38' N and it was from there that he brought back the oxen mentioned in La Pérouse's account. It is probable that La Pérouse confused the two expeditions into one. The diary of the inspectors also tells us about the authority that the baron claimed for himself with regard to the natives of the island. The most serious war that the French had in the region, according to La Pérouse, was not unjust in principle, but had the most disastrous consequences. Benyowszky had one day assembled a *cabar* to propose some arrangement to the blacks. He was in the midst of them, when he heard the cry: "Kill! kill!" At the same time, several rifle shots burst around him. He was not hit, and falling upon the blacks with his cane, he disengaged himself, fired a few cannon shots into the air, and when the blacks had dispersed, he demanded the punishment of the chiefs who had dared to fire upon him, and whose names he knew. The other chiefs replied that they had been wrong to want to assassinate him, but that they could not hand over the culprits to him, because they were their relatives and friends. This led to great disputes and finally to war. Benyowszky called the Sambarives tribe, who lived in the vicinity of Manahar, to his aid, and with the help of 600 of their warriors, he drove the Antamaroas, neighbours of his colony, from their villages. As a result of the war, the land was left fallow and there was a terrible famine in the whole region. Finally, in the summer of 1776, Benyowszky had recalled the Antamaroas to their villages, while giving land to the Sambarives, his allies.

But, until harvest time, the famine was to last: the mixture of Sambarives and Antamaroas gave rise to fears of war, especially as three quarters of the Antamaroas were still wandering in the woods; the chiefs alone had returned, accompanied by a small number of warriors. It was then that Benyowszky, seeing famine reigning around his settlement, wanted to attack the Sakalaves and subsist at their expense while waiting for the harvest. He therefore marched with his 80 able-bodied men to Manahar, where he had arranged to meet all the allied chiefs. He led his artillery with him. But he waited in vain: he was only joined by 25 negroes. The others destroyed their rice and starved the small army, which was only too happy to be able to bring its cannons back to the bay. It seems that Hiavy, the king of Foulepointe, had made the other chiefs say that if they joined the French, he would consider them his enemies.

The inspectors had summoned the chiefs of the Antongil Bay area as soon as they arrived. They gathered at Louisbourg on the afternoon of 30 September and Bellecombe held a large cabar in the presence of Benyowszky. There was Raoul, the main chief of the region, with about 30 slaves and 50 oxen, Mananding, chief of the Louisbourg and Port-Choiseul territory, owner of 10 slaves and a few oxen, and Dianmanou, one of the richest, who owned 60 slaves and as many oxen. There were only seven of them in all; the others, numbering between 30 and 40, were not there, either because they had not been warned or because they did not want to come. Bellecombe had the interpreters ask them some questions:

"Were they satisfied and happy to see us on their land?"

The chiefs remained for a long time without answering, looking at each other, and looking up at Benyowszky who, from his place, was watching them: finally, one of them stood up and said that they were very pleased to see the French and were willing to continue the trade with them as before.

They were then asked why they had made war on us. They replied that, seeing Benyowszky disembark with troops, contrary to the habit of the French, when they came to trade, they had feared that he would come to seize their goods and persons, that they had abandoned their lands and, in view of the state of war, had withdrawn to the mountains where they lived by chance on what they found. The next day the palaver was resumed; Bellecombe exhorted the blacks to keep the peace, promised them the protection of the king, and recommended them to return to their lands. The *cabar* ended with the natives taking a solemn oath to keep the peace in the future, and then delivering brandy and gunpowder to enable them to indulge in their usual revelry.

The commissioners completed their examination of the work done by the baron around the main establishment, but their impression was very different from that which they had received from the overly precise accounts of the engineer Gareau de Boispréaux. They found it impossible to verify the filling of the marsh, the cost of which was estimated at 12,000 livres. Fort Louis was, as we have seen, nothing more than a simple palisade surrounding a few miserable huts decorated with various names for the effect to be produced. The path from the fort to Louisbourg via the lock was a small path where there was no lock. On the Île d'Aiguillon, where there must have been a garden, a canal 83 toises long by one wide and 3 feet deep, there were only a few remnants of work. The bakery, the house, the two huts to be used as a hospital marked on the plans, at the Anse [*cove*] des Convalescents, did not exist. There was no trace of roads, although the engineer's account showed an expenditure of 35,000 livres for this object. For the work done on the plain of Health, there appeared nothing of the bleeding and filling ordered by the baron which had cost 14,000 livres. The government building, 70 feet long by 30 wide and 8 high, valued at 11,300 livres, was rotten and uninhabitable.

A canal for confining the boats, costing 1,000 livres, was the work of Nature alone. Expenditure had been made on the creation of posts in the interior which had never been occupied or had only been occupied for a short time. It was the same for the post of Manahar, where 1,200 livres had been spent according to the account, and where there had been no one for a long time, and for the post of Massoualé, where 3,200 livres had been spent and which was also abandoned. At Foulepointe, where Benyowszky said he had built 6 new houses, 1 hospital and repaired all the old buildings, Bellecombe and Chevreau had seen only old and ruined buildings, not one new shingle. The expenses supposedly made for a road from Louisbourg to Foulepointe could not be verified; the west coast road which was to lead to Morungana Bay in the Savassi States could not be discovered. Mayeur's expenses in his expedition to Bombetok seemed very exaggerated. He was accompanied, it is true, by 160 armed men, but they were only blacks, paid at the rate of one rifle for forty-five days and feeding themselves. He had declared to the commissioners that he had arrived only 15 leagues from Bombetok, contrary to the baron's statement that he had acquired a port on the west coast of the island. This expedition was said to have cost more than 15,000 livres. "All the expenses," said the inspectors, "could be counted and put among them."

At Fort Saint-Jean, the costs of a bastion and a stable [*cavalier*] were counted: "We have seen," says Bellecombe, "neither bastion nor stable." The buildings of Louisbourg, hospital, government, 22 houses, all valued at 19,284 livres, were made of round piles driven into the ground, simply joined at the top by a crossbar and covered in sheets, except for two pavilions covered in shingles. For fixing the small flagpole in a block of stone, 1,500 livres were charged.

Benyowszky had 175,512 livres in expenses for roads, buildings and mission expenses. La Pérouse, who had seen Foulepointe, Louisbourg and the neighbouring posts, said that the buildings may have cost 40,000 livres and were not worth 10,000 livres when he saw them. But these increases in expenditure which were made by the baron to conceal his squandering and to justify his demands for money are less extraordinary than the excess of impudence with which he sent the plans for his alleged works to France. His engineers, Gareau de Boispréaux and Rozières, were not of a rank that could resist his orders. It was he who forced them to draw the attractive plans which were attached to his dispatches and several of which are still in the colonial archives.

One sees there carried and figured as in full service all these roads whose expenses are registered in the account, but of which the inspectors did not see any trace. As a part of these expenses were supposed to have been incurred in the last months of 1775, it is certain that if one had found some remains of the works in September 1776, they would have been really done. But two roads costing 30,000 livres had totally disappeared. The town of Louisbourg consisted of fewer huts than are shown on the plan, and the town of Plaine de Santé had no reality except in the baron's imagination: there had never been anything but a shanty.

What he called a fortress was a stockade; what he called a governor's residence was only a straw hut. When he was asked for some clarification of his expenses and accounts, he replied that he knew nothing of commerce or finance, that the whole administration had been in the hands of the people sent from the Île de France by Maillart, and that he was not answerable for their management. As for the treasurer Besse, this former coachman declared that he knew nothing of his duties; his books were not kept either for receipts or expenditures. All the operations appeared in the most perfect chaos: "We are in the impossibility, said Bellecombe and Chevreau, "to rule on anything called revenue, expenditure and consumption."

And repeating a phrase from Maillart-Dumesle, they added that it would be necessary to treat this accounting as that of a ship wrecked and lost body and soul. The questions they put to the baron on their arrival were nevertheless answered by him in a way that deserves to be analysed. They are accompanied by notes and reflections from the commissioners which complete the picture of the man and his work.

They had asked him to submit his orders and correspondence to them. He gave them only a letter from M. de Boynes of 19 March 1773 and a copy of the letters of the same day to Messrs de Ternay and Maillart.

"What a surprise it was for us," wrote the commissioners, "to learn from him that he had not been given a copy of the letter when he left France and that he had not received any order from the king to come and take possession and establish himself in Madagascar in any place on the island that he might have thought fit to choose. It was therefore necessary for him to regulate his conduct according to a simple copy of the minister's letter to Messrs. De Ternay and Maillart, under whose orders he was never to be found, However, all the services he was to expect depended entirely on them, as well as on the knowledge he was to give them of his needs. From these sorts of contradictions were to follow the difficulties and embarrassments which caused discontent and anxiety to Messrs. the heads of the administration of the Île de France and to Baron de Benyowszky himself. From there, complaints and letters to the minister, and it is finally only since the last letter from M. de Sartine in July 1775 that Messrs. de Benyowszky is accountable for his operations only to the minister and that he is absolutely independent of the government of the Île de France: these same uncertainties have also caused very high expenses, either by the shipments made from the Île de France to Madagascar or by the purchases which M. de Benyowszky has made on the spot at exorbitant prices."

As for the fortifications, the commissioners examined the extract of the protocol of the engineers and other accounts amounting together to 171,566 livres: they found that it was very expensive for the king for some palisades driven into the ground, and close to each other and for some straw huts covered with leaves.

There was no longer any trade, but Benyowszky accused the administrators of the Île de France of having prevented him from doing so by refusing to supply him with goods. There were over 100,000 ecus worth of invoices for goods supplied to Louisbourg, for which he did not report the counterpart. It was certain that there had also been considerable abuse in this area. For example, there was no evidence that the baron had sold rice or made shipments to the Île de France on behalf of the king. The frigate *Belle-Poule*, which had come to Madagascar to bring relief to the colonists, had only been able to load 6,000 pounds of rice in return.

"Finally," added the commissioners, "we have been able to convince ourselves that most of the facts alleged by M. de Benyowszky in his letter to the minister of 20 March 1775 are entirely false and that the spirit of this letter can only mislead and hide all the truths concerning Madagascar... M. de Benyowszky would have done much better to confess quite naturally that the war he has been obliged to support since his arrival in Madagascar was the real cause of the lack of success of the trade. How could he have done it at a time when he himself was unable to provide for his troop? And yet, it is proven that he had permitted himself to take 192,000 livres from Sieur Bourdé, who settled with him in monetary notes, whereas he claimed not to have any stocks.

"While the letter from M. de Boynes, the only document from which one can infer the government's plans, speaks only of a post to be created in Madagascar, M. de Benyowszky claimed to be responsible for making a conquest and founding a colony.

This project currently appears too expensive to be feasible. It would cost too many human lives and too much money.

"As for the property rights which the baron claims in his letters to have acquired over all or part of the island, it is obvious that he has imposed them. It is clear that the natives only support us out of terror. They tried to oppose the establishment of the baron on the plain of Health and he only triumphed over the Saphirobays or Antamaroas by calling for help from the Sambarives of Manahar, who burnt and ravaged everything in the valley of the Tanqueballe. Hyavi, chief of Foulepointe, always a friend of the French, had at first refused to assist M. de Benyowszky in his war against the Sakalaves; he supplied him with a total of only 25 men, which forced the baron to camp for three weeks with his troop in the vicinity of Manahar and to withdraw to Louisbourg without having done anything. As for the tributes and royalties, M. de Benyowszky assures us that there are some agreed upon, but we can have no other proof than his assertions. On the treaties and engagements concluded between the French nation and the Malagasy chiefs, the baron answered that he had sent them to France: it is moreover certain that the number of auxiliaries which he could gather is infinitely lower than what he says: he would have great difficulty in gathering 3,000."

Thus, from Benyowszky's own replies, a refutation of his own letters emerged. The island he represented as conquered had not even been visited; the French were harassed even on the coast of Antongil Bay. The great war against the Sakalaves, which had given rise to veritable dithyrambs of epic poetry, had not taken place. There were no cities, no fortresses, no buildings; only the expenses were real. They amounted to 1,799,100 l. 1 s. 15 d., not including the loss of the *Siren*, valued at 250,000 livres. There were only 86 soldiers alive in the posts, 120 Frenchmen in all, counting the workers and employees.

300 people had been lost since 1773. Benyowszky does not seem to have been much moved by the shameful contradictions to which the investigation forced him. La Pérouse spoke one day with him about the little use that France would get from the stay he had made in Madagascar, the baron answered that a lesson of 2 millions was not too expensive to teach the ministry that nothing could be done in Madagascar in a small way; but that if one wanted, with a proper budget, to have here a small navy, to give it 2 millions a year and to maintain its corps at 600 men, which supposed 4 to 500 men of recruit per year, he believed that, in twenty years, this colony would have already made great progress. La Pérouse having asked him what his views were when he arrived in Madagascar, he replied: "To reduce the people to do what the king would like and that he had never well known the intentions of the government in this respect." Bellecombe having said that the conquest of Madagascar could only be very difficult, Benyowszky declared that it was a real folly to attempt it. However, he added that "if France gave it up, he did not despair of offering it and having it accepted by the Emperor, the King of Prussia or the Great Mogul". This seems contradictory and it is not clear what Benyowszky could offer: but he was already thinking, no doubt, of what he would do if he ceased to be employed either in Madagascar or elsewhere.

"If you look at the whole thing in cold blood," writes Bellecombe at the end of his report, "you can rightly exclaim: 'What a picture! What misery! What an administration! What a chimera! Today we are convinced, and everything proves it, that never was the government kept in error as it still is, since M. de Benyowszky reports to him on what concerns him!'"

He recalls that Benyowszky had accused Ternay and Maillart of having sold rice to the Île de France at 45 livres per quintal. However, Ternay had proved that this price had varied from 25 to 30 livres only.

Benyowszky had written in his own hand in his answers to the questionnaire of the commissioners concerning the sum of 65,000 livres given to Assises by Maillart in 1774: "The authorising officer has used this sum for his particular affairs." The commissioners said: "Now, we have found, in our presence and in that of M. de Benyowszky, 53,353 l. 10 s. 2 d. of receipts in good standing in discharge of M. Desassises, which makes us presume that justifications for the 11,640 livres which remain will be found."

"The more we re-read," they add, "his letter of 20 March 1775, the less we conceive how a man in office, to whom the minister has given public marks of confidence, can expose himself to announcing and presenting as certain considerable successes and advantages in the enterprise with which he is charged, while everything has shown us at every step, loss of men, dissipation of money and effects sent and bought on behalf of the king, disorder and confusion in all parts of the service, discontent and war on the part of the natives, flight and abandonment of their lands ; finally, the sad spectacle offered to humanity by the rest of our unfortunate fellow citizens, who have escaped until now from the pestiferous air of Madagascar, the fear of famine, for lack of rice, do not all these calamities seem to have come together and merged to form the most striking contrast with the picture of wealth and prosperity in Madagascar, which M. Baron de Benyowszky took the liberty of presenting to the Minister with the intention of persuading him?"

It is difficult to pass a more severe, yet at the same time fairer, judgment on this unfortunate enterprise and also on the dishonourable lies which Benyowszky had allowed himself to make. If the commissioners had had the power to do so, it seems that his immediate dismissal was necessary, and perhaps his arrest. But, as we shall soon see, they did not even have the power to relieve the colony. Perhaps there was also a certain charm about the baron that made him forgive his faults and indelicacy;

One would not understand, if he had not had certain seductions of figure and spirit, that he could have made so many dupes among men who were neither fools nor even credulous people; one would not understand that, having written the page we have just read, Bellecombe and Chevreau were able to add these words: "It is difficult to meet a man more extraordinary in his ideas and in his words than M. le baron de Benyowszky. The desire to command and despotism seem to be his two favourite passions. The desire to wage war and to use his sabre animates him and heats him up often and as if in fits; finally, the *ultima ratio regum* (this is the motto of his beliefs) is one of his favourite precepts; to these dispositions which seem natural in Baron Benyowszky and which are indeed so, he combines a strength of temperament and an uncommon temperament. Adding his first inclinations, first abbot, then page, then marine guard, serving after the emperor the king of Poland, then, finally, the confederates. Taken prisoner by the Russians, he was taken to Kamchatka. Let us pay attention to the very remarkable way in which he left this exile, the happiness he has had up to now in resisting this climate, and we will see that this Hungarian colonel of 37 years of age ¹ is made and destined for great adventures."

It can be seen that honest Bellecombe and honest Chevreau, although warned by their own investigation against the baron's stories, had not failed to give credence to what he had told them about his past life. It was for them that he was willing to call himself abbot, page and marine guard. He took the trouble to give them a personal share in the vast treasure of his lies, for these are three fables that he invented for them alone.

¹ NB Benyovszky was born in 1746; later in his autobiography he claimed to have been born in 1741; here he has obviously told the commissioners that he was born in 1739 !

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CHAPTER VII

Liquidation of the company. - Was Benyowszky Ampansacabe of Madagascar? - He leaves for France, is well received there, returns to Austria. - Pressed for money, he organised a slave trade expedition to Madagascar. - He attacks the French posts. - The governor of the islands sent a party against him: Benyowszky died in the fight ¹.

The Commissioners did not have the authority to abolish the posts and to bring back the miserable remnants of the colony. They certainly regretted that they could not do so and did not hide it from the Minister. But they were content to leave things as they were until a decision could be made on their report. They therefore appointed an authorising officer, M. Coquereau, acting as deputy commissioner of the navy, to keep the accounts; they recommended that he should have the most correct relations with Benyowszky.

But as soon as he knew of their decisions, he wrote to them requesting temporary leave, arguing that he had spent nearly four years in Madagascar and was very ill. He asked permission to spend the bad season in the islands. As his health was indeed failing (he was suffering from scurvy), the Commissioners were willing to grant the leave requested, provided they were assured that the colony would be peacefully governed during the absence of the chief, according to their views, until the king's orders were received.

1 * A. C. C5, 8. – *Archives du ministre des affaires étrangères* Fonds Asie, vol. in-18.

The baron replied, on 2 October 1776, that the person who would take his place was perfectly capable of fulfilling his mission and that he would leave him instructions as precise as possible. Thereupon the commissioners allowed him to cross to the islands by the first vessel to restore his health. They themselves, after having provided for the needs of the soldiers for the year 1777 and left Coquereau the necessary funds, left Antongil Bay on 6 October 1776. They went to Foulepointe, stayed there from the 16th to the 31st and left that day for India. Their report was only sent from Pondicherry, by the ships of October 1777, because it was only in May 1778 that M. de Sartine took a final decision. We could stop the story of Benyowszky's attempt at colonisation here and briefly relate the last adventures of his life, if we did not have to make known the truth about the strangest and most famous of all those he attributes to himself.

In his *Memoirs*, he tells us that he was recognised as a descendant of the ancient Malagasy chiefs and that he was proclaimed Ampansacabé, i.e. sovereign lord, king or emperor of the whole island.

This is the most extraordinary fable in this book, which contains so many, for at least the escape from Bolsheretzka and the stay in Madagascar are real events, the details of which have only been falsified, whereas nothing of this royalty ever existed except in the imagination of the storyteller.

First of all, we would point out that the part of the *Memoirs* relating to the Madagascar expedition can be found in manuscript in the French colonial archives, under the title: *Manuscrit de M. Chevillard*; however, this copy, contemporary with the events, simply ends with a very exact account of the events just reported:

the measures taken by the commissioners, the request for leave made by Benyowszky, the departure of the commissioners and of the baron himself, are all correctly described. The making of the novel is therefore later than the first writing of the *Memoirs*; this would be the work of a M. Chevillard, otherwise unknown, to whom Benyowszky would have supplied more or less well-ordered notes and a simple outline.

This is how the final editor tells the story in the edited text, in London:

"On the 2nd of February 1776, M. Corby, one of my most trusted officers, informed me that the old negress Suzanne, whom I had brought from the Île de France, who in her youth had been sold to the French and had lived more than fifty years in this island, had spread the rumour that her companion, the daughter of the Rohandrian Ampansacabé, Ramini-Larizon, having been taken prisoner, had been sold to foreigners and that she had proof that I was her son. This officer informed me, moreover, that on this rumour the Sambarive nation had held several *cabars* or assemblies to declare me the heir of Ramini and, consequently, master of the province of Mananhar, and, then, successor to his dignity of Ampansacabé or supreme chief of the nation, a title which, since the death of Ramini-Larizon had been extinguished... On the 9th of February, 1776, I learned from an interpreter that an old man, from the province of Mananhar, had divulged prophecies, which foretold a general change in the government of the island, and which assured that the descendant of Ramini would rebuild the city of Palmyra."

The blacks then sent ambassadors to ascertain his true descent, but this attracted the hostility of the Saphirobay because the chiefs of this tribe had once been involved in the murder of Ramini-Larizon. This explains the war they waged against him.

However, this beginning does not deliver what it seems to promise: there is little or no mention of anything else until the date of 16 August 1776.

But that day three chiefs asked the baron for an audience on behalf of their nation. With them came 1,200 blacks preceded by the standards of their provinces. One of the chiefs made the following speech, which the reader will appreciate as it deserves: "Blessed be the day on which you were born! Blessed be the hour when you set foot on our island! The Malagasy chiefs and captains have learned that the King of France proposes to put another in your place and that he is angry with you because you refused to hand us over to his tyranny. Their love, as well as their attachment to you, obliges me to reveal to you the secret of your birth and of your rights over this immense land whose people adore you. The spirit of God which reigns over our cabars has inspired all the chiefs and captains to commit themselves by oath to recognise you as their Ampansacabé, to leave you no more and to defend your person at the cost of their lives against the violence of the French."

However, it is known that on this date of 16 August 1776, nothing threatened Benyowszky; he was even unaware of the forthcoming arrival of the commissioners. After the natives, three officers, at the head of 50 men, declared to him "that they were all determined to give their lives, rather than see him leave the island, that in relation to themselves, as they had connections with the natives, they were determined to stay in this island, and that consequently they begged him not to regard them as officers, but as men devoted to his interests."

He objected to them: but they replied that the officers and soldiers were all in agreement with the native chiefs and that nothing would prevent them from carrying out their plan.

So on the morning of 17 August sixty two chiefs went to the cabar, to a large room on which the blue flag had been displayed, which Benyowszky was now adopting in place of the white flag. One of the chiefs, speaking for the others, said to him:

"We, the princes and captains, here assembled and representing the nation, determined by the rights of your birth, by your wisdom and by your affection for us, declare at this moment that we recognise you as our Ampansacabé and beseech you to accept this title and rank with all the assurance of finding in all our hearts fidelity, affection and constancy..."

The baron stood up and replied that the same zeal that the nation had already recognized for his benefit committed him to accepting their offer...

A second chief called Sancé then spoke and told him that his nation wanted him to leave the service of the King of France, to make all those who wanted to settle in Madagascar leave it, and finally to declare which province he would choose for his residence, in order to build a town there. He replied that it was his intention to carry out the first two parts of this request, but that he could not do so before the arrival of His Majesty's commissioners... because, being committed to the king's service, he was not yet free to act; whereupon he and the Malagasy chiefs bound themselves by the oath of blood, which consists of sucking a drop of the blood of the one who is recognised as their chief.

Benyowszky claims to have known that the Commissioners had orders to take him to Europe, if they could do so without exciting an uprising of the natives, which is absurd and false at the same time; the Commissioners were going to India and had no power to relieve the colony, they even granted him, at his request, a convalescent leave. He declared that he had tendered his resignation as soon as the inspectors arrived, and on 4 October he was said to have held a solemn *cabar*, in which he asked the chiefs whether they wished the French to continue their establishment, promising on oath to make their decision known to the King of France. The chiefs, having held a council, answered him:

"Wise and prudent as you are, could you doubt our attachment to you? If your heart speaks for the French, write to their king that we offer him our hearts and our friendship.

But we want to live under your laws, you are our father and our lord. Let the French cherish you as much as we do, and our arms will be united with theirs... But, if you are the object of their hatred, we shall never recognise them as our brothers, and your enemies will be our enemies..."

Assured of their wishes, he took an oath to inform the king of France of the intentions of the people of Madagascar.

On 6 October, chiefs and a large number of natives arrived to escort him to the place where his solemn proclamation as Ampansacabé was to be made before the whole nation assembled. He left of his French dress and took the local one. When he arrived at the *cabar*, he passed between the ranks of the Malagasy, who were shouting loudly, invoking their god Zahanhar. The officers of his volunteers had followed him, as well as the whole colony.

On 10 October, after four days of deliberation among the chiefs, the national assembly was formed. In what place? The *Memoirs* do not say; but they say that there were 30,000 armed men there, not counting the women. Then a chief harangued them in these terms: "Blessed be Zahanhar who has returned to see his people! Blessed be the blood of Ramini to whom our attachment is due!... It is his descendant whom I present to you. I give him this assegai so that he will be the only Ampansacabé, as was our father Ramini. Recognise the Ampansacabé, submit to him! Listen to his voice!"

Then, addressing Benyowszky: "And you," continued this good savage, worthy son of the blood of Ramini, "implore the assistance of God who enlightens you with his spirit. Be just, love your people as your children, let their happiness be yours and be no stranger to their needs and misfortunes."

When he had finished his moral speech, he put the assegai in the hands of the baron and bowed to him. So did the other chiefs. "In the end," said Benyowszky, "I saw more than 50,000 men prostrate before me."

This is 20,000 more than at the beginning of the cabar. He answered them in Malagasy: "Veloun Raminitka! Veloun ouloun Malacassa! Veloun Rohandriani! Veloun, Veloun Zaffé Aminiha Mitomba Zananhar!" This means (according to him): "Long live the blood of Ramini! Long live the Madeca nation! Long live the Rohandrians! Long live the blood of our fathers and may the God who created heaven and earth grant us all a long career!" Moliere lends such persuasive eloquence to the son of the great Turk. Then the new ruler slit the throat of an ox before the chiefs of each of the various clans, and each of them drank a drop of the victim's blood or dipped his assegai in it and licked the iron. In this way the oath of loyalty was taken. In the evening, three hundred women, forming dances, came to take the oath to the baroness.

The next day, the oath was written in Roman letters and in the local language. It was signed by Hiavy, Lambouin, chief of the North and, according to the *Memoirs*, "a host of other names".

On 13 October the Ampansacabé gave the following speech to the chiefs: "As a consequence of my election to the post of Ampansacabé, I find myself charged with a very painful burden. The general good of the Malagasy nation must be my first object. To achieve this goal, I am convinced that power must be placed in the hands of a supreme council, composed of members of known wisdom, prudence and activity. This council will exercise all the acts of sovereignty, and will alone possess the right to convoke, with the consent of the Ampansacabé, the general assembly of the nation. It shall be composed of natives and Europeans, and from among them shall be chosen those who shall be appointed to the offices of governors of the provinces, as well as to the offices of ministers of state in the departments of war, the navy, finance, or commerce, justice, or agriculture... There shall be a permanent executive council, provincial councils."

He therefore appointed 2 Europeans and 8 natives as members of the Supreme Council;

There were to be 32, but 22 places were reserved to be filled later, as the need arose; then he appointed 2 Europeans and 6 natives to the permanent council. There were to be 18 in all.

Benyowszky then relates that he persuaded the chiefs to let him go to Europe, in order to conclude trade treaties with some of the nations there. He received their oath to remain faithful to him during his absence, organised an army, distributed flags and finally left on 14 November on the *Belle-Arthur*.

These are the main features of the story he offers to the credulity of the readers.

Do we really need to say that there is not a word of truth in this story?

It was invented in every respect at the time when the baron, losing hope of obtaining new competitions in France, decided to appeal to foreigners. Hence the hostile passages against the French in this account and the advice given by the Malagasy to him to beware of the French. This roughly dates the composition of the novel to 1784 or 1785. In 1786, after his death, various pieces of his work were taken from his luggage. Like all liars, the baron often contradicts himself: first of all, it was a copy of the oath taken by the Malagasy chiefs, but they would have taken it on the 1st of October, and not on the 10th, as the *Memoirs* say. There were also minutes of the meeting at which he had received powers to conclude trade treaties: the meeting was held on 3 October, but the *Memoirs* put it back to the 20th of the same month. Not being in agreement with himself, Benyowszky cannot be in agreement with the truth.

What is the point of discussing such obviously false accounts? Benyowszky did not resign from the French service, since he asked for leave on 2 October.

He did not summon anyone on either the 1st or 3rd of October, as the commissioners were with him at Louisbourg and all three wrote and answered each other on those days. There was a *cabar* on October 1st, but it was held by the inspectors; only seven chiefs from the neighbouring townships attended. The names of these seven chiefs are in Bellecombe's report: Hiavy's name is not there, nor Lambouin's. Who will believe that the baron was proclaimed Ampansacabé on the 16th of August in the presence of his officers and soldiers, with their complicity, and that the commissioners had not the slightest suspicion of such an affair, and that no Frenchman, no native, after the baron's departure, betrayed this secret? The intrinsic contradictions, the state of the Malagasy tribes, the implausibilities we have noted would prevent us from accepting Benyowszky's account, even if we did not have a continuous and factual train of events in the various written testimonies left by de Bellecombe, by La Pérouse and by the narrator himself. There is not a word to be retained in this tale, which was fabricated to serve as a lure for the naïve people who in 1785 provided the money for a new Madagascar expedition. There was no gathering of the Malagasy nations, no *cabar*, no coronation, no council of state, no ministers and no king: it would have been a greater miracle to have been able to hide these things than to have done them. Not only did not one of the French, officers or volunteers, alleged accomplices, not one of the civil servants of Madagascar or of the islands have the slightest suspicion of these revolutions; but not even the baron himself, for we are in possession of a letter, written in 1784 to Hiavy, his supposed vassal, in which he does not make the slightest allusion to his kingship.

We must now return to the faithful documents and tell the end of the hero's adventures.

Benyowszky had been granted leave by the Commissioners to go to the islands and restore his compromised health. However, he remained in Louisbourg until the end of November;

but then he decided to leave for France, to anticipate the unfavourable report which Bellecombe and Chevreau could not fail to make. He used as an excuse the need for service, the necessity of giving the minister an exact account of the situation of the establishment and of taking orders from His Majesty on this subject. He designated the Chevalier Sanglier to exercise the provisional command in his place. The latter was ordered to see to it that Coquereau, who was in charge of the rice trade, had the rice supplied to the Île de France regularly. He was to forbid trade to private individuals, except in case of necessity for the establishment. He was to maintain peace among the friendly tribes, to contain the Sakalaves, if they reopened hostilities; he was not to establish any new post, even if the natives requested it, and he was to keep all his people assembled at Louisbourg; he was to maintain the posts of Plaine de Santé, Angontsy, and Foulepointe. He was replaced in this last location by the Sieur de Mallendre. There is nothing in these *official and autographed* orders that reveals the Ampansacabé or the existence of the Malagasy kingdom.

Sanglier took advantage of the passage of a private vessel to go to Antongil Bay, where he arrived in January 1777.

However, on receipt of Bellecombe's report, which did not arrive in France until March or April 1778, Sartine sent a report to the king, following which an ordinance of 22 May 1778 suppressed the corps of foot volunteers and formed from their debris a free company [*compagnie franche*], of which Sanglier took command with the rank of infantry major in the troops of the colonies. The only notable event in Madagascar in 1777 was the revolt of ten soldiers from the garrison of Foulepointe against their leader, Lieutenant de Mallendre, because their pay had not been paid. They deserted, but out of ten, seven were killed by the blacks who pursued them, and three were recaptured and clapped in irons. In 1778, the 'free company' had to be concentrated in Fort-Dauphin to protect the trade there.

Sanglier and Coquereau received these new orders through the intermediary of the Vicomte de Souillac, successor of the Chevalier de Brillane, who himself had replaced Ternay in 1777 and who had died in post. These orders arrived on 29 June 1779 and were immediately executed. On 30 July, the surviving soldiers abandoned Louisbourg and the *compagnie franche*, reduced to 68 men, disembarked at Fort-Dauphin on 13 August. It seems to have been forgotten there, no doubt because of the war. It can be seen that the pay was not paid until October 1782 for all the time that had elapsed since 1 January 1777. On 1 January 1781 there was only one officer, Major Sanglier, and 48 soldiers; 20 men out of 68 had died in the last three years. In January 1782, these last remnants of Benyowszky's corps were brought back to the Île de France: no vestige remained of the establishment founded at Antongil Bay.

As for the baron, who left without regular leave for France at the end of November 1776, he arrived there in April 1777. He does not seem to have been badly received, although people were surprised to see him come back: they had not yet received Bellecombe's reports, and they were quite well disposed towards this foreigner, who had voluntarily entered the French service. He was forgiven for his troubles with the administration of the islands because of his ignorance of our regulations and morals. He asked for the cross of Saint-Louis and the rank of brigadier, which he said he had been promised by de Boynes in 1773. He presented his accounts and obtained before any examination a provision of 50,000 livres (27 July), payment of his pay in arrears since 1 January 1776 and 30,000 livres to be claimed on what was still owed to him (5 November 1777), in other words, 100,000 livres in a few months. He was awarded the Cross of St Louis (May 1777) although he had only four years' rank and French colonels were required to have 18 years' service to obtain it. He tried to attract the attention of M. de Sartine by presenting him with a plan for the colonisation of Madagascar in which we find his daydreams and also his ordinary lies, but in which we see the first form of the idea that he would try to realise in 1784.

According to this plan dated from Versailles on 6 September 1777, the island of Madagascar, the neighbouring islands and all the civil and military establishments already formed with all the effects belonging to the king would be given to the baron of Benyowszky and to the company he would constitute for thirty consecutive years. The king would maintain the corps of Volunteers at 600 men, and would allow all his subjects to settle on the island where the baron could issue them with land concessions. The Benyowszky Company would have a monopoly on trade, under penalty of confiscation for offenders. The Company would also have free trade, like the king's other subjects, from the Cape of Good Hope to the Red Sea and to China. In the event of war, it could arm the navy's passing ships for its benefit. The king would defend it against foreign nations, and, at the end of thirty years, if he did not extend the privilege, would be obliged to take back and pay for all its civil and military buildings, ships, trading posts, artillery and effects. The goods imported by it would not pay any other duties than those imported by all other French companies, and the wood and ropes of Madagascar would not pay anything. The same would apply to tobacco.

In return for these rather exorbitant privileges, the Company undertook only to supply 1,200 oxen per year at 120 livres each, to be sent to the Île de France, 1 million livres of rice at 10 livres per hundred [pounds?], to export 300,000 livres per year to France and to supply the king's ships at the fairest price.

However, Benyowszky had, probably through his brothers and M. de Vergennes, asked Maria Theresa for a pardon for the faults which had forced him to go into exile in Poland. Having obtained it, according to a Hungarian historian, he asked for a leave of absence and went back to his country (November 1777).

He wrote a letter from his castle of Vietzka to the Count de Vergennes dated 15 January 1778 in which he informed him that he had been received with esteem by his compatriots and that he had returned to possession of part of his property, namely the castle of Vietzka and its outbuildings, but that family arrangements had placed him under a debt of 150,000 livres. He asked him to take an interest in the settlement of his pay and the pecuniary claims he had made for supplies and expenses settled in Madagascar in the interest of the king. He repeated that M. de Sartine had promised him the rank of brigadier as a reward for his services. Vergennes transmitted this letter to the minister, expressing his interest in the baron. The latter, having returned to France in the spring of 1778, sent M. de Sartine, dated 8 April, a memorandum in which he took the title of count for the first time. He recalled that he had explained in detail his entire administration and that the minister had appeared satisfied with his explanations, that he had had the honour of placing before his eyes the statements of all the expenses he had made for the establishment, accompanied by the supporting documents. These advances had obliged him to commit himself personally, and, although the minister had put him in a position to discharge the greater part of his debts, he nevertheless asked that his accounts be cleared as soon as possible. He insisted on the request he had made for the rank of brigadier, adding, rather boldly, that this grace had been promised to him as early as 1773, and that moreover he had been a general-major in the service of the Polish confederation. He asked that he be assured of a treatment appropriate to his rank and quality and that he be willing to be employed in the war which seemed about to break out in Germany. "There is," he said in conclusion, "no expedition, however difficult or perilous it may be, that I am not in a position to undertake and conduct with courage and prudence."

In support of his claim, he presented a patent of general-major of the troops of the Polish Republic signed by Michel-Jérôme Krasinsky, field marshal-general of the Confederation of Bar, and Michel-Jean, Count Paç, marshal of the General Confederation of Lithuania.

The patent is dated 16 July 1772. It refers to his escape from Kamchatka. It was therefore written in Paris. It was of little value, being signed by two exiles, and must not have had much effect, if it was even believed to be authentic.

The king having, by order of 22 May 1778, reformed the corps of Volunteers, it was felt that Benyowszky should be given compensation. In a letter dated 14 June 1778, the minister announced that the king, as a reward for his services, was granting him the rank of brigadier with a pension of 4,000 francs from the funds of the Île de France. His former salary of 6,000 livres would be deducted from him from 1 November 1777 until he received the pension. His claims were settled as best they could, for his accounts were not clear-cut; he was awarded the sum of 151,869 livres (26 July 1778). Finally, at his request, and while waiting for him to be employed, the king authorised him to take up service in Austria, and, to prove his satisfaction, decided to maintain for him, during his absence, the pension of 4,000 francs which was granted to him (3 August 1778). Benyowszky had no cause to complain about Sartine. The latter overruled the objections of the offices, which did not understand why such a promotion should be given to an officer as unserious as the spurious conqueror of Madagascar, nor why his pension should be maintained for a man who was passing into the service of the Emperor.

Benyowszky left France at the end of August 1778; he was in Strasbourg on the 22nd and went to Austria, just as the War of the Bavarian Succession was about to break out. His younger brother, Emmanuel, second lieutenant in 1777 in the Siskovics regiment, was then serving in the 2nd carabinier regiment in Koeniggraetz. Benyowszky arrived there in September and on the 26th was appointed second colonel of the Szekely-Hussars. On the following 2 November, the first colonel having been retired, he took his place. He claimed to have distinguished himself by defeating the enemy near Friedrischswald, on the 7th October, with two squadrons of his hussars. He boasted of having taken 822 prisoners at the battle of Schwedeldorf on 18 January 1779.

It is unfortunate that there is no evidence of these exploits other than his letters. He soon sent his resignation to Joseph II; it was accepted on 12 May of the same year. Around this time, although he had few resources, he had bought the castle of Count Pongracz in Vietzka. He began to study the maritime trade in Fiume ¹ and the means of communication from this port to the Hungarian interior. The count of Kaunitz, having learned of this, asked him to give his opinion on the Austrian navy and trade. On 20 March 1780 Benyowszky presented a memorandum on this subject to the United Chancellery of Bohemia and Austria, which forwarded it to the Royal Chancellery of Hungary. After the death of Maria Theresa, Joseph II gave him full freedom to act, and towards the end of 1780 he was busy with trade in Fiume and the relations of this port with the overseas and inland countries. But he did not have sufficient resources, he had little fixity in his plans and they failed miserably. It was his money troubles that caused him to make new representations to the French Ministry of the Navy about this time concerning the settlement of his accounts. He claimed, under various pretexts, a sum of 83,000 livres. He demanded, among other things, the interest on the money he said he had advanced to the Treasury, and the price of various supplies for which he gave no justification. These new demands were refused to be taken into consideration because the first ones had not been discussed nor had the accounts he had presented been judged rigorously in 1778: they had been set at 152,000 livres and the sum had been paid to him. Although the documents he had brought in support of his claims were less than regular, being attested or signed by persons under his authority, and contradicted by the reports and observations of the inspecting commissioners and various administrators, there was a great deal of indulgence for a foreign officer unaccustomed to details and not at all familiar with the forms of our accounting.

1 Fiume is now named Rijeka

His last claims were therefore dismissed. But he had borrowed 30,000 florins from Count Czigala at 11% per annum, 35,520 florins from Count Christophe Bartenstein and 5,000 florins from others. Towards the end of 1781, he fell into great financial difficulties; his creditors demanded their dues, his employees their wages. In order to pay Count Czigala, who was very worried about his funds, he had to take out a loan, pledged on his property in Vietzka. He abandoned his business in Fiume and left it to his partner Joseph Marotti. He even left Hungary, leaving his creditors a property in the county of Trencsény as payment. This was at the end of 1781. He then returned to France, where he related that he had been employed by the emperor with the rank of general commanding the outposts in Wurmser's army. He added that he had refused the offers of Joseph II, in order to remain in the service of France, and asked M. de Castries for a job. But, unable to return to the king's service, he passed to America and remained for some time in Philadelphia, begging for a position, which he did not obtain: this is not surprising, for in 1782 the continental war was more or less over. He went to Santo Domingo. The governor of this colony was precisely M. de Bellecombe; he announced to M. de Castries the arrival of the count at the end of September 1782. Benyowszky said that he had been charged with a mission in America. In reality, he had Mme. Benyowszka apply for a job in Santo Domingo, worthy of his zeal and experience, and announced that he would wait for an answer in the island. One of his brothers was then serving in the foreign hussar corps. Receiving no reply, Benyowszky set sail for France on a Dutch ship. Bellecombe had charged him with carrying his dispatches to the government. He disembarked at Belle-Île on 11 April 1783. He was still a brigadier in the retinue and received the pension of 4,000 livres which had been assigned to him; but, understandably, this was very little for him.

He thought, in desperation, of seeking his fortune in Madagascar, perhaps because his first expedition had given him profits from trade or the negro trade. On 13 June 1783, he therefore presented a new memorandum to the Comte de Vergennes, in which we find the plan for a company to exploit Madagascar. He asked for permission to go to the island, with a few officers and workers whom he would associate; provided that he was provided with ships, he did not ask for any subsidy, promising, in exchange for this advantage, to supply the French island with oxen, rice and slaves, and the French ships with food supplies and, in the event of war, with sailors. Assuming, no doubt, that all his previous lies had been forgotten, he spoke shamelessly of consolidating the advantages he had obtained from the people of Madagascar.

Vergennes, who, in this circumstance, seems to have lacked foresight, transmitted the memorandum to M. de Castries on the following 19 June, enclosing a letter in which he said:

"I am not unaware that the first plan of this officer was opposed, that he was even reproached a little; it is nevertheless proven that he was peacefully established in the interior of the island, which others could not obtain. I must assume that the Count of Benyowszky has people who provide him with funds for his new venture. It is for you to judge, my lord, whether, lest the English make some attempt to form similar establishments, it would not be proper to let this officer make a new trial, under the protection of the king, by providing him with the small amount of assistance he requests."

But this request was not granted and Benyowszky sought his fortune in England. It is rather difficult to believe that he could have had recourse to the Emperor. However, there is a document in the archives of the colonies which would tend to prove it, if it is authentic. Here it is, in its chancellery Latin:

Nos, Josephus Iidus divinâ favente clementiâ, Romanorum Imperator, semper Augustus, Rex Hungariæ, Bohemiæ, Dalmatiæ, Croatiae, Ludomiriæ, Galliciæ, siquidem expositum nobis fuit per dilectum a Nobis Mauritium Augustum e Comitibus Benyowszky, Regni Hungariæ Magnatem, qualiter nam populus insulæ Madagascar eidem supremam potestatem regendi detulerit ipseque ad civilisandam nationem administrandumque gubernium ad dictam insulam se reddi cuperet, Nosque ad justum petitum ejus, ex jure gentium condescendere obligaremur, præsentibus notum facimus prædictum Mauritium Augustum e Comitibus Benyowszky, sub nostra particulari protectione assumptum libere maria sub vexillo nostro peragrarè, inque dicta insula colonias instituere guberniumque. Datum Viennæ Austriæ die vigesimâ Septembris anno Domini millesimo septingentesimo octogesimo tertio. Signatum : Josephus Iidus. - Ex mandato suæ S. C. R. Majestatis proprio : Cobenzel.

This patent only gave Benyowszky a 'flag of convenience' and no resources. He himself says that at that time he was reduced to poverty.

He therefore sought to obtain funds from the British government and went to England in the autumn of 1783. Dumas, major-general [*maréchal de camp*], former governor of the Île de France, wrote on 16 November to M. de Vergennes to warn him of the plans that were being made by Benyowszky. He announced that the count had been in England for some time to solicit the government and that on 8 November Mme de Benyowszky and her children had left for that country.

"He has copied his theme," Dumas quite rightly said, "from the story of Theodore (de Neuhof), who, with the help of the English, succeeded in having himself declared king in Corsica, and who, if he had had the character of the Count of Benyowszky, would perhaps have succeeded in having himself recognised as such by the powers of Europe. He sought to have the first advances made by England, in the hope of soon making himself independent.

Having had the opportunity to talk with him during the short stay he has had in Paris since his return from America, he spoke to me about Madagascar and his *theodoric* project shone through in all his speeches, it transpired through his eyes and pores."

Vergennes simply forwarded Dumas' letter to the Maréchal de Castries on 28 November 1783.

However, these plans began to cause concern because it was feared that the English would seek to establish themselves in Madagascar.

According to obviously exaggerated reports, it was believed for a moment that Benyowszky had left England with five ships and a large number of European volunteers, including some forty Frenchmen. It was said that he was going to found a colony in Madagascar, under the flag of the German emperor; but this seemed unlikely: it was believed that these pretexts disguised the action of the English government. Orders were consequently sent to the governor of the islands of France and Bourbon. He was advised not to indulge in any hostility against Benyowszky's companions, but to enter into contact with him, to find out on what grounds he was founding a colony in the island and, however, to oblige him not to settle on the eastern coast where our trading posts were and not to disturb our trade.

In reality, Benyowszky had obtained nothing from the British government, which he had tried to get to agree to his plans. He had made friends with a certain [Jean-Hyacinth de] Magellan, who was born in Talavera in 1723, had lived in France, emigrated to England in 1764 and was a member of the Royal Society of London, where his work on the apparatus of astronomical physics had won him admission. This Magellan, no doubt rather naive, allowed himself to be duped by Benyowszky, who in 1784 was in full possession of his role as Ampansacabé, to which he seems to have given the last perfection only at that time. He lent him money, received his papers and memoirs on deposit, and was one of the organisers of the association that the baron sought to form.

Not having found in England all the necessary money, Benyowszky, whose true plans we shall soon understand, went to America with some associates, to complete his funds and organise his expedition (May 1784). Here is the account given by Captain Paschke, Knight of the Order of Cincinnatus, Captain of Cavalry in the United States Army and one of the associates, of his steps:

"The proposals of the count to set up a trading company in Madagascar having been rejected by the courts of Versailles and London, he found a way of associating himself with private individuals who were, among others: M. Petit, the son, Colonel Eissen, M. de Magellan, Captain Graterol, Brossard, the two Texier brothers, Curtal and Hinsky, all of different nations. This association was made in London, but as the funds which had been initially intended for the establishment were not sufficient, most of the entrepreneurs named above embarked in May 1784 for North America from where the expedition was made, in order to see for themselves. The proposals seemed so advantageous that the number of partners was increased by Messrs Zollichofer and Meissonier, merchants in Baltimore, the Baron of Adelsheim, Major Collerus, Messrs Benfoglioli, Sandoz, Luigini, Michel and myself."

A formal contract had been concluded between Zollichofer and Meissonier on the one hand and Benyowszky and his associates on the other. Among these the baron counted in the first rank the Sieurs Mayeur, Corby, de Mallendre, de la Boulaye, the first, an interpreter, the other three, officers of the volunteers. However, the latter were dead; only Mayeur remained attached as an interpreter to the French trading post at Foulepointe. None of them had ever been aware, of course, of the Baron's plans: he took their names to give confidence to his financial backers, and even gave Mayeur the status of intendant in charge of managing the domains of Madagascar.

He undertook, in return for the expenses incurred by Zollichofer and Meissonier, to load the vessel *Intrepid* with Negroes of good constitution, healthy and free of all disease, to be sold at the Cape of Good Hope or in Santo Domingo; the funds would be credited to the company. "*As the main point of the said establishment in the island of Madagascar is for the trade, traffic and export of blacks for foreign countries*", Benyowszky gave his word of honour to multiply the shipments as much as possible, always in the care of Zollichofer and Meissonier. They were authorised to take their first capital outlay of 62,880 livres on the first shipment, with 100% profit, and these profits were never to be contested. They would have 5% on shipments and returns, as a commission and without prejudice to their other rights. All shipping costs would be met by Benyowszky's company, which would insure the vessel in London for £3,500. The lenders were to receive 50% on the value of the returns in the 2nd, 3rd, 4th, 5th and 6th years, the company being made for six years, and to account for the rest to their partners. Benyowszky gave them 2,000 acres of land and the town of Mauritania in Madagascar.

In this seemingly generous contract, the financial backers, despite their harshness, were still duped. The expedition left Baltimore on 21 October 1784: it consisted of a fine ship of between 5 and 600 tons, called the *Intrepid*; there were 62 people on board, including 4 women. The associates were bound by an oath; they had to recognise the baron as their leader on all occasions. All of them embarked, except for the sirs Petit, Biskin, Magellan, Zollichofer and Meissonier. The main cargo consisted of 300 barrels of gunpowder and 55 cases of 25 rifles each, instruments and utensils for agriculture and construction, cloth, sheets, brandy and food for the 62 people who made up the crew.

At the end of December, the ship ran aground during the night on the coast of Brazil. It was only through the skill and goodwill of Captain Davis that she was able to be refloated. It was even necessary to sacrifice 10 of the 20 cannon it was carrying. They stopped at 3°15' latitude to repair the damage and take on supplies; but the country being poorly populated and cultivated, they could only load a few barrels of manioc and water. In this place, the Texier brothers, either because this misadventure had disgusted them, or because they were afraid of the future, separated from their companions. The others set sail on 7 March 1785, and on 4 May they passed within 12 or 15 leagues of the Cape of Good Hope. They were in the grip of famine: the ration had been reduced to two pounds of cassava flour per week. In spite of this distress, there was no way of persuading the baron to stop at the Cape: the suffering and murmurs of the crew, the representations of his associates, nothing could move him. Perhaps he feared being abandoned by those who accompanied him, perhaps he also feared that France or England would oppose his enterprise. In any case, they continued to sail in the hope of arriving soon at Antongil Bay, the place chosen for the settlement. The Count had promised to get supplies at the first land he saw; he had made so many promises that the discontented had calmed down a little. The ration was reduced to 1 ½ pounds of manioc per week; meat was lacking, but the chief was accused of having reserved some for his own use.

Finally, on 22 May, the vessel was in front of Sofala; they dropped anchor in this port and they were able to restock with the help of the Portuguese. After three weeks, the *Intrepid* set sail for Madagascar; the south-westerly wind prevented it from rounding Cape St. Mary, so Benyowszky decided to land on the west coast, and at the end of June, he anchored in sight of Cape St. Sebastian. He informed the main chief of the region, Lambouin, of his arrival;

this chief came to the shore accompanied by 200 well-armed negroes. He brought oxen, to the great joy of the crew. The count made a blood covenant with Lambouin; this consisted of making an incision in each other's chest and drinking the blood that flowed from it; this ceremony was performed to the sound of the ship's artillery. After several conferences with the natives, the count decided to have a house built for himself and a storehouse to hold most of the goods and especially the ammunition. He declared this operation necessary because of the danger that the cargo ran on board a ship anchored near a coastline bordered by rocks; he said that it would be easy to send everything by canoes to the bay of Antongil.

A few days later, according to Paschke's report, he sent his servant to M. Mayeur, whom he claimed to be steward of his lands, with orders to send him 250 blacks whom he intended to arm and use to load the ship for his return.

It is quite obvious that Benyowszky was deceiving his companions, since he had neither estates nor a steward on the island. During this interval he seems to have changed his purpose often. Sometimes he wanted to load the ship with rice, sometimes with precious wood. Nothing was decided, but his conduct gave rise to conjectures among his companions which were not very honourable for him. They were beginning, a little late, to find something fishy in his plans and to distrust his promises. In the meantime, it was learned that the king of the Sakalaves of Bouéni, with whom Benyowszky had had a quarrel during his first stay on the island, was coming to the coast on the pretext of visiting him. The baron ordered three cannon to be landed and a small entrenchment to be erected in case the Sakalaves wanted to commit hostilities.

On 1 August, the chief of Bouéni arrived with about a thousand men;

he left the bulk of his troop a league behind and presented himself with only fifty guards. Benyowszky asked him to conclude the alliance of blood, but this proposal was evaded on the pretext that it was getting late, and the ceremony was postponed until the following day. After having accurately reconnoitred the position of the camp, the black chief placed himself, with his 50 men, between the entrenchment and the rest of his troop. The baron did not seem to mind and was content to have the sentries doubled. In the evening, the Sakalaves brought rice and asked for brandy in exchange: as there was a shortage of it, Benyowszky sent Captain Paschke on board the ship to bring back a barrel. This officer had to spend the night there because the ebb tide prevented him from returning to shore. Suddenly, around midnight, the sailors who were on watch heard several cannon shots and irregular musketry fire: the camp was under attack. The crew, caught up in a panic, wanted to cut the cables and leave; the officers succeeded with great difficulty in containing them until the morning.

At the first light of day, signals were given, cannon shots were fired and the salvos were repeated until noon without result. From a distance, it appeared that the house, the store and the entrenchment were destroyed. No white man was visible: the shore was covered with a crowd of blacks; rare rifle shots, repeated by the echo of the woods, seemed to announce the death of the last fugitives. Captain Davis resolved to weigh anchor at noon, and, after a painful eleven days' navigation, he reached the island of Anjouan; he took provisions there and succeeded in reaching, on the 18th of August, the port of Oïbo on the coast of Mozambique. There, the ship was sold in the name and for the benefit of the shipowners Zollichofer and Meissonier. As for the fate of Benyowszky and his 35 companions, the sailors and officers of the intrepid ship never knew anything about it and were convinced that they had all perished.

However, *Intrepid* had been sold to the captain of a French merchant ship, the *Maréchal-de-Saxe*. This officer reported to the Vicomte de Souillac, governor of the islands, what he had learned,

and the latter, on 28 December 1785, sent a report to France, welcoming Benyowszky's death, because of the dangers that his presence could pose to the French trading posts in Madagascar. It had been mistakenly believed that Benyowszky had left America with 5 armed vessels; information from England had led to the assumption that he had the approval and was flying the flag of His British Majesty, and it had been resigned to leaving him free to establish himself on the west coast.

But M. de Souillac was not long in being disabused of this belief; on 2 January 1786 he reported to the minister the surprising news which had reached him. Benyowszky had not perished in the affray of the previous August: he had even routed his adversaries; and, thanks to the help provided by the chief Lambouin, he had loaded all his goods onto pirogues and, following the coast of Madagascar, had arrived on 12 October at Angontsy, a little to the north of Antongil Bay.

There he found three employees attached to the counter, seized the goods and weapons, and sent a troop of blacks commanded by six of his white companions to Foulepointe to assault the French post and secure the support of Chief Hiavy. At the same time, he fortified himself at Angontsy and urged those of his companions who had remained at Lambouin to send him what he had left of gunpowder and arms: to decide the chief to let them go, they had to give him the reason that they were at war with the French.

M. de Souillac, learning that Benyowszky had plundered the goods of the Angontsy factory and that he was trying to circumvent Hiavy, chief of Foulepointe, would have liked to act without delay to stop these activities. But the bad season prevented him from sending men to Madagascar who would have died of fever. He only gave the order to Sieur Mayeur, an interpreter who resided in Foulepointe and who enjoyed great authority with the natives, to refuse Benyowszky all food and help, and even to seize him, if it was possible;

It was known that he had only about 15 whites and 60 blacks hired as servants.

The people of Angontsy were gentle and timid; they took sides neither for nor against the newcomer, but they were terrified by the name of Benyowszky, whose stay on this coast a few years earlier they could not forget. M. de Souillac resolved to wait for the effects of Mayeur's policy: the same man whom Benyowszky presented to his people as the inspector of his domains was thus charged with fighting him. In April, when the fine weather began, the governor planned to send a ship to Madagascar on which he would embark 50 to 60 troops, commanded by a chosen officer. The ship would be disguised, would make contact in Foulepointe, and if Benyowszky was installed in a place within reach of the sea, such as Angontsy, the ship would go there: one would enter in contact with him and one would try to make him prisoner to send him to France under heavy guard.

In the meantime, the baron addressed a letter to M. de Souillac, dated from his general camp at Angontsy; in it he stated that the French could go to his establishments to obtain all the food they wanted, but he urged them to abstain entirely from the black trade, as repugnant to the beneficent character of His Most Christian Majesty. He threatened the French employees who indulged in this trade that they would be treated not as subjects of the King, but as disturbers of public peace. He obviously wanted to suppress competition. He declared himself Ampansacabé of Madagascar, sovereign lord, dated other letters from his town of Mauritania and signed them: "Mauritius-Augustus, Dei gratia, Ampansacabé of Madagascar." He said that his power was derived from the consent of the people who had confirmed it to him by oath and blood.

However, Souillac had sent to Foulepointe, in the first days of December, the king's 'flûte' the *Osterley*, commanded by the Chevalier de Tromelin. Now, during the night of 22 to 23 December 1785, four pirogues arrived: they carried 6 whites and 80 armed blacks, detached by Benyowszky to seize the king's stockade. But, having recognised a fairly large vessel at anchor, they did not dare to approach the palisade directly and went to Hiavy, chief of this canton. The latter told them that he would not allow the French settlement to be attacked and sent word to the chief trader, who immediately notified M. de Tromelin. The Chevalier immediately disembarked with part of his crew in arms. Hiavy was informed and went to the fort with the six envoys of Benyowszky; but he demanded a promise that nothing would be done to them, since they had entrusted themselves to him.

The leader of these men named himself: he was a German gentleman, the Baron Adelsheim. M. de Tromelin proposed to Hiavy to have them all arrested and taken on board, but this aroused murmurs among the blacks, and Hiavy recalled that he had been promised that their liberty would not be infringed. M. de Tromelin, feeling that there might be danger in insisting, confined himself to demanding that their white crescent flag with a star at each end of the crescent, on an azure field, should be shot down and that their detachment should return at once to M. de Benyowszky's establishment, about 30 leagues away. It was agreed that they would leave the next day and this was done without difficulty. Hiavy, for his part, assembled the blacks from Angontsy who were under his control and forbade them, on pain of slavery, to provide any further assistance to the baron's people.

The latter then made M. de Tromelin hold a copy of a supposed authorisation from Emperor Joseph II which allowed him to colonise Madagascar; at the same time he sent Hiavy a threatening letter, in which he declared that he would be in Foulepointe within thirty days.

Informed of these events, the Vicomte de Souillac nevertheless stuck to the plan he had first formed, and did not act until after the winter season.

The report of the officer he sent to Madagascar, Captain Larcher, will tell us how, after so many adventures, a catastrophe ended Benyowszky's heroic-comic life with a tragedy. Captain Larcher left the Île de France with a detachment of 60 men of the Pondicherry regiment, on the private vessel the *Louise*, on 9 May 1786. On the 17th, at 6 o'clock in the evening, the ship anchored in front of Foulepointe, from where care had been taken, before wintering, to remove the employees, the goods and the artillery. After having gathered some information on the establishment of the baron at Angontsy, Captain Larcher took Mayeur with him, who was to serve as his guide and interpreter.

On the 20th, during the night, the *Louise* weighed anchor and went to Sainte-Marie to complete her information. There, they learned from the chiefs of the island that Benyowszky had sent two whites and a few blacks to the bottom of Antongil Bay, not far from Manahar, to exploit a silver mine, but that he was still in person near Angontsy; he was building a village which he called the town of *Mauritania*. Nothing precise could be learned about the situation of this village or about the baron's forces. It was believed that he had 15 or 16 whites and 200 blacks armed, but no artillery or fortifications; but this proved to be incorrect. On the 21st the *Louise* set sail again, and on the 23rd at 4 o'clock in the evening she entered the bay of the East Cape. At the end of this bay was the store where the French, who were trading, kept their goods. It is known that Benyowszky had seized it as soon as he arrived. A large number of people were seen near this store, observing the vessel; but their colour could not be distinguished.

As soon as the anchor was dropped, Larcher lowered 40 men and 2 Rostaing guns into the longboat and tried to go ashore; but the night, the violent currents, and the ignorance of the landing forced him to return on board. At 4 a.m. on the 24th, he re-embarked with 24 men, the 2 cannons, an officer and the interpreter Mayeur in the longboat, 16 men in the dinghy; the officer and the remaining 20 men were to follow as soon as the longboat could return to take them. The commander gave a direction that would take the little flotilla a long way from the old post to deceive the people he had seen and assumed would be waiting there. The soldiers disembarked in the greatest silence. They were twenty paces from the edge of a very thick wood which the moon illuminated with dubious glows: no sooner had sentries been placed than two rifle shots were fired from the side of the store. Immediately Larcher had the troop formed, loaded the guns, lit the fuses and stood ready to repel the attack to protect the landing of the soldiers whom the boats were returning to fetch on board. Five or six more detonations broke out at the same place; but he did not allow them to be answered. The rest of the expedition finally reached the coast and joined the first detachment after hearing a few bullets whistle.

Daylight was beginning to appear and a group of men could gradually be discerned towards the square from which the shots had been fired. Soon two whites and many armed blacks could be seen, whose numbers increased every moment. Larcher fired a cannon at them; they went back into the wood and were lost to sight. The commander then proposed to Mayeur that he should go and see Benyowszky for a parley under truce: "I will certainly not," replied Mayeur; "he'll have me hanged. Give me one of your pistols and I will follow you." Then the little army set off. The vanguard, commanded by M. de Caradec, preceded the artillery; a corporal and four men searched the woods in front and to the left.

Larcher came next with his two pieces and the rest of his troop. Believing that he would find resistance at the old French post he was approaching, he put the guns in battery and continued his march ready for any event. But the palisade had been abandoned: fire was still found there, proof that those who had fired the shots had spent the night there. The French could only see the seemingly impenetrable forest around them: there were no paths or footprints. Mayeur himself did not know the exact position of Benyowszky's fort. Larcher, not knowing from which side to enter the forest and not wanting to go into it at random, had it carefully explored on the outskirts of the depot to find the way by which one should reach it from the inside.

At last some traces of oxen and men were seen, which revealed a narrow road recently cut through the forest. It was conjectured that it must lead to the new town of Benyowszky and it was decided to follow it. The surgeon, a corporal and 4 men remained in the depot to guard the reserve ammunition and to ensure communication with the ship. It was nearly eight o'clock when they entered the path, which was just opening up through thick thickets. Fifty paces from the edge, they came across a marshy stream which could only be crossed by a large tree thrown across it. The pieces had to be carried by hand and five other very wide streams had to be passed in succession, the muddy banks of which presented the greatest obstacles. Fortunately all was quiet and no resistance was encountered. It is probable that Benyowszky did not believe that this path would be discovered and that he awaited the attack by the more practicable and shorter route which followed the coast. He had set up an advanced post on that side and made abatis, but he had not guarded the side of the wood.

However, the French arrived at the edge of a last stream, where they were obliged to dismantle the pieces to make them pass over a half-rotten bridge. They were then near the town:

they heard the noise made by workers who seemed to be driving piles. After a quarter of an hour's march, the vanguard signalled that it had reached the exit of the wood and that it had discovered the town. Larcher went to reconnoitre to examine the position and saw a large village about 300 toises away. At the end of the main street, a house appeared much larger and higher than the others; it was judged to be that of M. de Benyowszky. A clump of woods still concealed the fort. Only two flags could be seen over the treetops, one white and blue with a crescent and stars in the blue field, the other red; Mayeur said at once that the red flag was for the Malagasy a signal for battle and rallying.

Once this reconnaissance was completed, the commander returned to his troops, had the cannons and rifles, the powder-sacks and the cartridges inspected to ensure that the powder had not become wet when crossing the marshes; then he made his arrangements for the attack: at the head a small vanguard, then the artillery supported by a column of 42 men. Benyowszky, who was at the door of his house, saw the attackers and rushed towards the fort, shouting to all his men to get ready: "The first one who takes a step backwards, I'll blow his head off", he shouted as he entered. He was surprised, but did not mean to surrender.

The soldiers then discovered, on an elevation of about twenty-five toises, a fort surrounded by palisades nine feet high; in the middle, on a dominant platform, two pieces of 4 and four espingoles were pointed towards the French. About ninety men, white and native, armed with rifles, were placed on the slopes of the battery in the palisade.

"Witnessing their movements," says Larcher, "we advanced in good order, without haste and without firing. About 250 toises from the fort, we saw M. de Benyowszky himself fire a cannon at us:

the ball passed over our heads; at 100 toises we were hit by another with grapeshot; at 60 toises a third whose bullets took the hat off one of my soldiers and broke the rifle of another; 4 espingoles were firing at the same time and the musketry was lively. We accelerated our march, to take shelter from the musketry behind the large house, at the foot of the hill on which the fort was. None of the soldiers, attentive to the command, had yet fired: under cover of the house, we formed two platoons for the assault, and I ordered the fire to begin on both sides of the house. At this moment I observed that M. de Benyowszky had just fired a piece, from which the shot had not gone off. We were so close that this shot would have killed us, or wounded most of the detachment. I thought the moment was decisive, I ordered the assault and we went up. I was still a few paces from the outer palisade, when I saw M. de Benyowszky, armed with a rifle, fire it and let it fall, bringing his left hand to his chest and his right in front of him towards us, then taking a few steps to descend from the battery and falling against the piles which supported the planks. We crossed the stockade and entered the fort. As we climbed up to the battery, I passed by M. de Benyowszky who seemed to be trying to say a few inarticulate words. I had orders to give and could not stop at that moment. I returned two minutes later: he was expiring. A bullet had passed through his chest from right to left. The blacks escaped over the fence."

The whites asked for quarter and were granted it. No one had been killed, except the baron: the French had had only one wounded. There were eight white prisoners, and in the morning the blacks brought Mme d'Adelsheim and a Portuguese woman from Rio de Janeiro. Benyowszky was buried; the fort and the village were destroyed; the chief of the country promised to live from now on in good agreement with the French and the expedition left.

On 26 May, the few effects found in the fort and the village were sold at auction in Foulepointe. Less than 200 piastres were taken from them and distributed to the soldiers. There was little merchandise and little ammunition; most of it having remained on the west coast, at the place where the adventurers had first made landfall.

As for the baron's papers, they were contained in a large leather portfolio. In it was found a report dated 3 October 1776, relating a cabar in which the Malagasy chiefs entrusted Benyowszky with full powers to negotiate with the kings of Europe in his capacity as Ampansacabé. It was supposedly signed by Hiavy and Lambouin.

Another document dated 28 March 1784, in London, appointed Magellan as adviser to the supreme council of the island, plenipotentiary agent in Europe and gave him full powers to deal with sovereigns, companies and individuals in all matters relating to trade, emigration and supplies to be made to the State of Madagascar. A third document dated August 1785 from the camp of Ankourou, countersigned by M. de Graterol, chancellor, named the Chevalier Hensky secretary of state and lieutenant general of Madagascar.

A total of 8 Europeans were taken: 2 Frenchmen who had been forced to take up arms by Benyowszky were sent back to France. 4 American sailors, who were left from the crew of *Intrepid*, were embarked as sailors on the frigate la *Subtile*.

Finally, the Baron d'Adelsheim, a German gentleman, and the Chevalier de Brossard, a Frenchman, established in America where he had served and obtained the decoration of the Order of Cincinnatus, were the only surviving associates of all those who had made the voyage to Madagascar. Both of them were very poor and believed that Benyowszky was going to Madagascar under legal conditions and could assure them a future.

Brossard had asked to withdraw as soon as he had seen the conflict with the French, and this had made him distrust the baron, which was not without danger. He and Adelsheim seemed more to be pitied than blamed; it is not known what decision the minister took in their regard.

No remnant of the sad city of Louisbourg remained and no one ever saw the tomb where Maurice-Auguste, the emperor of Madagascar, slept his last sleep.

APPENDICES

ARCHIVES OF THE MINISTRY OF COLONIES. MADAGASCAR FONDS C5, CARTON 3,
1769-1773

Notes concerning Baron de Aladar de Beniowsky, 20 March 1772.

This foreigner calls himself *Baron Mauritius Augustus Aladar de Benyowsky, Sacratæ Confoederationis generalis regimentarius*.

This is how he signed the letters he wrote to M. le Comte de Mercy, ambassador of Vienna to His Majesty. He gave me two copies under flying seal by duplicate, one of which is attached. M. de Aladar told me that he is of Polish origin, that he is the thirteenth baron of his name, that his grandfather passed to Transylvania at the invitation of the Emperor, who made a considerable state for his family in this province, which His Imperial Majesty wanted to repopulate. The baron of Aladar, in his early youth, took up arms. Unable to accommodate himself to his colonel, he left the service and retired to Transylvania, where he devoted himself solely to study in order to acquire the knowledge befitting a gentleman.

He was in France for a year, and he was also several times at the court of Vienna. During his travels he was known to Prince Albert of Saxony, who has a special kindness for him. M. de Aladar experienced them especially when this prince made a trip to Transylvania. I could say many other things about the reports made to me by this foreign officer, but it is not appropriate for me to confide them to the paper at such a great distance;

moreover, they will develop in Europe as they did here, by verifying the first circumstances of which I believe I owe an exact account according to all that M. de Aladar told me; for it is always he who speaks in these notes which I am writing, as far as I can, from memory on all that I have been able to preserve from his own words.

He was in the Diet when Prince Poniatowsky was elected King of Poland. As a natural consequence of the party he professed in that assembly, he found himself in the confederation that rose against what resulted. He was made regimental general in this confederation and Prince Albert decorated him with the Order of the White Eagle.

He commanded a fairly considerable body of troops in Podolia, where, after several skirmishes, despite his resistance, and although on the first occasions he was not beaten, the superiority of the enemies always obliged him to withdraw and lose ground. Finally, being on the borders of Podolia and Wallachia, under a small fort, he was attacked at the same time by a considerable body of Russians and, on the other side, by a strong detachment of the troops of the king of Poland. He was beaten, wounded and taken prisoner. He was taken to Kiow [*Kyiv*] and from there to Casan [*Kazan*]. Until then he had been treated with great consideration and humanity; but on receiving news at Casan, having dared to go to Moscow or Petersburg himself, and his intelligence having been suspected or discovered, he was arrested and transferred, in irons, with the greatest harshness, from prison to prison, as far as the borders of Siberia. He was dragged throughout this immense province to the port of Ockow ¹.

I forgot to say that before he was taken to Kiow and Casan, he was locked up immediately after his fight in the citadel of Kaluga, where he found the bishop of Krakow also a prisoner. (This event comes only after he was arrested in Moscow or Petersburg, I am not sure in which of these two cities). Bound by interest, feelings and even acquaintance with this bishop, they had formed a plot to escape and probably would have succeeded, but for the uncertainties and weakness of this prelate, since the colonel commanding in Kaluga had himself joined the plot. This colonel escaped and went to Poland to serve the confederates. The bishop and the baron were taken to Siberia at the same

1 * Okhotsk

time, and as their carriages were sometimes next to each other, this gave them an opportunity to talk to each other, and they took advantage of this to establish a correspondence between the two of them, which has hardly ever been interrupted and which had subsisted since their meeting in the fortress of Kaluga. The bishop was taken to the northern end of the country of Kamchatka, on the borders of the land of the Korakis, and the baron was transported, as I have said above, to Ockow. A small ship was waiting for him there, and he was embarked to go to Kamchatka. There he was locked up in a fortress. But as the Russians themselves who are in that country are there in spite of themselves, it was not difficult for M. de Aladar to gain supporters there. Finally, one day, the season being favourable for setting sail, and there being three ships in the river, the baron took control of the fortress and slaughtered all those who were not of his party and who could resist him. He remained there for three days, without anyone knowing what had happened. He used this time to stock up on the munitions of war and food necessary for the execution of his plan. After having collected them, he took one of the three ships which were in the river and whose captain agreed to follow his fate. He sank the other two low so that he could not be pursued. He left Kamchatka as the eighty-third ¹, without finding any opposition. He left the river and sailed south along the western coast. When he reached the southernmost point of Kamchatka, he rounded it and then proceeded north-east, his first plan being to attack the western coast of America and, by successively straightening it out, to reach Acapulco.

In his navigation he met with several islands; he even became acquainted with the mainland; but various events forced him to return to the west. There is one circumstance which would be better explained here, but it is better for the Baron or myself to develop it verbally than to hazard a secret [in writing]. He landed in Japan and some of the neighbouring islands: he was differently received there, according to the different characters of the nations. He also came to Formosa, and finally directed his course towards the Manila or Philippines. A gale prevented him from landing there and forced him to make for China. He came to Macao; there he was very well received by the Portuguese governor and he gave notice of his arrival to the French

1 The meaning of this phrase is very obscure; but presumably means that he left in the company of 82 others?

commercial interest in Canton. At the same time he claimed the protection of the king and put himself under the French flag. M. le Chevalier de Robien, head of this trading post, took his claim into consideration.

The Dutch and the English wanted to lure de Aladar to their ships and offered to take him back to Europe. He constantly refused. The English were so persistent that four of their ships came to Macao with a white flag, in the hope that M. de Aladar would go there. He had had an interview with M. le chevalier de Robien, in which they had agreed on a particular signal. This saved him from falling into the trap that was set for him. M. Dumont confirmed this fact to me. Finally the baron embarked with all his people, reduced to the number of forty-seven, on the two ships the *Dauphin* and the *Laverdy*, and they arrived at the Île de France on the 16th and 18th of this month.

An event occurred in Macao which is worth reporting, but which can only be developed in Europe. A young girl of eleven or twelve years of age, who was with M. de Aladar, died in Macao. The baron wanted her to be buried solemnly in the first square of the church and he had some initial letters engraved on her grave. This adventure has been the subject of much discussion, especially by the English, for M. Russell recently told me that she was a young and beautiful woman disguised as a priest, and whose sex was recognised when she was buried. Surida, a Spanish Dominican, assured me again yesterday that it was a child whom he had always seen dressed according to her sex.

Among the people who accompany this Hungarian officer, there is one who is not of good will. He is a secretary to the Empress of Russia, whom he arrested when he took the fortress of Kamchatka, and from whom he seized all the papers, among which is an original document of the last importance. He is carrying it himself to Europe, but he will leave a copy with me, so that no event may, if possible, rob it of knowledge. The woman who came to the Île de France with the Baron is the widow of the captain who commanded the Kamchatka ship and who had voluntarily surrendered himself to the fortune of M. de Aladar. This captain died in Macao and the Baron thought he should regard this woman as his sister or daughter. It is suspected that he even went further, and that may be, although the widow is not very young or pretty. In

any case, she lives very much withdrawn at my house in her room, from which she does not come out, and M. de Aladar claims to have no relationship with her.

This stranger is covered with wounds, some of which disfigure his body and make it difficult for him to walk. In spite of this he has retained a great air of health and vigour: he has a pleasant physiognomy and sparkles with wit; but he is still wiser and more reserved, speaking readily, but never dealing with things he does not want to explain, and saying only what he wants to say. I believe him to be naturally proud and imperious; but when he has given his trust, he is of the greatest honesty. I have reason to believe that he has opened his whole soul to me only because I am the king's man. Since he took this decision, he seems to have to do something for the Chevalier Des Roches every day. He has touched on all the sciences, and the notions most alien to his first state have often been useful to him in the singular events of his life.

At the Île de France, 20 March 1772.

The Chevalier des Roches

ARCHIVES OF THE MINISTRY OF COLONIES. MADAGASCAR COLLECTION. C3,
CARTON 3

Count de Boynes, Minister of the Navy, to the Duc d'Aiguillon.

Versailles, 30 June 1772.

I have the honour, Monsieur le Duc, to send you an extract from a letter which M. de la Vigne-Buisson, commander of the port of Lorient, received from the officer on the vessel the *Dauphin*, concerning the Hungarian officers and soldiers, who claimed in Macao the protection of the nation, in the name of the Empress Queen, and whom M. le Chevalier Roth has already announced that he has taken in on his vessel in order to procure their return to Europe.

This vessel is expected shortly in Lorient, and I can only rely on the measures you will judge appropriate to take for their subsistence and the help they will need to get to their homeland.

I have the honour to be, etc.

ARCHIVES OF THE MINISTRY OF COLONIES. MADAGASCAR COLLECTION. C5,
CARTON 3

The Duc d'Aiguillon to M. de Boynes.

At Compiègne, 30 July 1772.

I have received, sir, the extract which you did me the honour of sending me on the 30th of last month of a letter from an officer of the vessel the *Dauphin*, concerning the Hungarian and Polish officers and soldiers who, having escaped from the deserts of Siberia by way of Kamchatka, were collected in Macao by M. le Chevalier de Rothe and embarked on this vessel, which is expected shortly in Lorient. I have taken measures, sir, to ensure until further notice the lodging and maintenance of this small troop, by writing to Count de Grave, commander in Brittany, to have it established in this place, and to provide for its daily subsistence, under the supervision of a war commissioner who will draw up a statement to serve as a review. As soon as this statement reaches me, I will have the funds necessary for this part of the expenditure transferred to the Port-Louis from those of the foreign affairs service.

When you receive, sir, some particulars or historical details of the voyage and crossing of these foreigners, I shall be most obliged to you to inform me of them.

I have the honour to be, etc.

ARCHIVES OF THE MINISTRY OF COLONIES, MADAGASCAR FUND. C5, CARTON 3

Report on the Madagascar expedition.

30 December 1772.

His Majesty has been good enough to approve that the necessary assistance be provided to the Baron de Benyowsky, Hungarian by origin and formerly a colonel in the service of the Confederation of Poland, who claimed His Majesty's flag in China, and who arrived in France on the vessel the *Dauphin*, with three other officers and several soldiers who had embarked with him at Kamchatka.

It seems appropriate to fix the status of these foreigners by attaching them to the service of His Majesty in order to take advantage of the knowledge that M. Benyowsky has acquired in the course of a navigation as long as it has been laborious, and to prevent him from bringing it to other nations. To this end, it is proposed to create a corps of light troops under the name of Benyowsky's volunteers, to serve indiscriminately in all French establishments beyond the Cape of Good Hope. By fixing this corps to the Île de France, it could be an object of emulation for the other troops of the colony. But it can be used more usefully to carry out a plan that has been formed for a long time on the island of Madagascar... After a series of errors and mistakes that the administration of the Île de France has made or tolerated, it was proposed, in 1768, to establish itself at Fort Dauphin, in the south of Madagascar, which had been occupied in the past by the French, and to form a colony of whites on the land that would be granted around this fort.

This project, which failed in its execution, was based on false principles, because it was based on a spirit of domination and conquest to which it was difficult to accustom a people to whom we had made our needs known without having tried to inspire them with them. A much simpler plan, and the only one that seems to be adopted, would be to civilise the inhabitants of Madagascar by good examples and the power of religion, and to inspire them with needs, in order to open up an outlet for French goods and merchandise, in exchange for which we would have the products of Madagascar.

Baron de Benyowsky has learnt, in the course of his navigations, the way to deal with savage peoples, and he seems to have all the talents and above all the gentleness of character which is appropriate for such a purpose. Finally, in the necessity of employing this officer for the reasons explained above, it is thought that a more useful use of his talents cannot be made at the present time and that it would be less costly to His Majesty, as the troop which it is proposed to raise under the command of Sieur de Benyowsky can be maintained much more easily and at less expense in Madagascar than in the Île de France.

With regard to the point of the island of Madagascar where it would be appropriate to form the projected establishment, it seems that one must leave the choice to the administrators of the Île de France, on which this establishment must depend, by indicating to them nevertheless the bay of Antonguil in the east of Madagascar, which seems to deserve the preference, not only because this part of the island was not yet frequented and that the inhabitants will be by this very

fact more ready to receive the impressions which one will want to give them, but also because it seems easy to open a communication by ground with that of Sauidié, located in the east of Madagascar, and that the inhabitants will therefore be more willing to receive the impressions that we want to give them, but also because it seems easy to open a communication by land from this bay with that of Sauidié, situated to the west, by means of which we would work more effectively to police the inhabitants of this end of the island, by breaking the links that they may have with the other natives of the country.

If His Majesty approves these arrangements, the necessary instructions will be given to the administrators of the Île de France.

Attached is the draft ordinance for the raising of the new troop with the list of officers which His Majesty is begged to approve.

Approved.

ARCHIVES OF THE MINISTRY OF COLONIES, MADAGASCAR FUND. C5,
CARTON 8

State of the services of M. the baron of Benyowszky, son of Samuel, baron of Benyowszky, general-major in the service of Her Imperial Majesty (the queen) of Hungary. (Benyowszky's autograph.)

In the year 1756, entered the service of Her Imperial Majesty of Hungary (*sic*) as lieutenant 1st in the Pallfy infantry regiment, Hungarian.

1758. Captain in the Baranyai-Houssard regiment.

1759. Functions as first aide-de-camp to the general Laudon, employed all his years in the war against His Majesty the King of Prussia.

1761. Taken prisoner in Silesia.

1762. On learning of his father's death, he withdrew from the Austrian service and entered the Polish service.

1763. He entered the service of the Kalicz-Cavalry Regiment in Poland as a major and continued until 1767. In 1768, at the time of the Confederation of the Palatinate of Cracow, he was appointed aide-de-camp to the Confederation.

1769. The Confederation of Cracow having joined that of Bar, he passed to the latter with 3,000 men, where he was employed as general marshal, with the rank of brigadier;

It was in this capacity that he was taken by the Russians with arms in his hands. As a prisoner, he was exiled to Kamchatka, from where he had the good fortune to escape in 1771.

In 1772, when he arrived in France, he had the good fortune to enter the service of His Majesty, as colonel owner of a foot corps of Volunteers.

In the same year, the Republic of Poland, as a reward for the services rendered to it by Baron Benyowszky, sent him the brevet of General Major with the White Eagle cord.

ARCHIVES OF THE MINISTRY OF COLONIES. MADAGASCAR COLLECTION.
C5, CARTON 4

Extract from the Protocol of the Engineers, - Orders from Baron de Benyowszky to M.Marange, engineer. (Excerpts.)

1774.

Sieur Marange, engineer, is ordered, after having raised the plan, to recognize the site of Marancet to proceed to the filling of the marshes, in order to be able to have a city there at the edge of the Tanguéballe river and a fort as well as the construction of the various buildings which will be necessary there. February 15, 1774, on board the *Desforges*.

It is ordered to Sieur Boispréaux to work, in concert with Sieur Marange, for all the works which will be ordered to them by us, and it is enjoined to Sieur Marange to recognize Sieur Gareau and Boispréaux in the aforementioned capacity of engineer in Marancet. 24th February 1774.

State of the expenses employed for the works of Louisbourg, made in consequence of the orders of M. the baron of Benyowszky, stopped on August 1, 1774.

(* Remarks and observations by Messrs de Bellecombe and Chevreau on the fortifications, civil buildings and others listed below:)

Elevation of the land.

600 toises long by 180 and 120 wide, 4 feet high, the river and the sea, having had 18 inches of levelling in the rising tides.

- This filling cannot be verified.
18,000 days of work at 10 sols per day, this 9,000 liv.
 - Purchase of wood for palisades, *fascines* and ‘*saucisses*’¹..... 600
 - Construction of 64 huts, including enclosures and hospital
..... 3,840
 - All these buildings were hastily and unsoundly constructed. They no longer exist: everything was renewed last year. The construction of Fort Louis and elevation to three feet above sea level of land 3,600
 - It is an enclosure in which 1,500 or 2,000 palisades have been used with 3 or 4 huts inside to house 25 men. store, powder magazine, guardhouse, everything fits.
The path from Fort Louis to the town and the fort's store, joint at the Lock 1,400
 - This is a small path; we did not see the lock. It must be destroyed. Cleaning of the natural channel above the black village to water flow 1,350
 - Expenditure that cannot be verified.
- 19,720 liv.**

Orders from Baron de Benyowszky to Sieurs Marange and Gareau de Boispréaux.

Sieurs Marange and Gareau de Boispréaux are ordered to survey the plan of the Corderie cove on the island of Aiguillon, to bleed the marshes which flood it, to fill in the hollows and shallows and to build a large hut and six huts to house the sick;

1 ‘fascine’ is a bundle of long sticks for filling embankments etc; a ‘saucisse’ (lit: sausage) is a long version thereof.

Secondly, to make a path to the mountain of La Découverte to place the observation pavilion there; 3° To build, at the Anse des Convalescents, four huts for the convalescents;

4° To build the bakery;

5° To build a storehouse and two huts halfway up the mountain for the accommodation of slaves suffering from smallpox.

Done at Marancet, 14 April 1774.

Thereagainst	19,720
liv.	

State of the expenses employed for the works of the island of Aiguillon made in consequence of the above order, stopped on August 1, 1775.

Opening of a canal for the flow of water in the Corderie cove, 83 toises long and one wide and three feet deep, both rock and easy earth, by the blacks' company 1,150 liv.

Cleared woodland for the establishment of the garden700

- There is only a very small trace of either of these works.

At Convalescent Cove, four huts for the sick 160

The bakery 400

The establishment of a house and two huts for the slaves attacked by smallpox 400

- There is no trace of buildings on this cove. We were told that they had been burnt down by the blacks.

Total	<u>23,810 liv.</u>
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Orders from Baron de Benyowszky to Sieur Gareau de Boispréaux.

M. Gareau de Boispréaux, engineer, is ordered to replace M. Marange in his functions to receive in his hands the papers, instruments, etc., and to follow the work which remained to him to finish, as well as those which will be ordered to him by us in the future. Done in our general camp, in Marancet, on 21 May 1774.

Note: M.Gareau will take great care to count the tools and record the expenses he will incur as a result of his work.

Letter from Baron de Benyowszky to M. Gareau, concerning the road to be built from Louisbourg to Angontsy.

The natives of the country having represented to us that the impracticability of the roads prohibited the communication of the trade of this country with the Seclaves, moreover this communication becoming very advantageous to our government for the export trade, it is ordered to Sieur Gareau to follow the expedition of Sieur Mayeur, interpreter, and to use all the pots to make a convenient way from Louisbourg to Angontsy, observing to make the least expenses that he can, and to bring all his care for the economy and, so that the blacks can be well led, we gave order to our major to provide you a detachment for the conduct of the workers.

Done in our government of Louisbourg, June 10, 1774.

State of the expenses employed in the execution of the road from Louisbourg to Angontsy, through woods, marshes, mountains and rivers, to 34 leagues in length according to the above order.

260 men employed five months 15 sols per day, in trade effects, making 69,000 days, this	29,250 liv.
On the other hand	23.810
<i>Ditto</i> for the Louisbourg road to 28 leagues across the marshes and plains, 80 men employed 73 days at 20 sols, 5,840 days ..	5,840
	<u>58,900 liv.</u>

- Very considerable expenditure, very useless, and which it was not possible for us to verify. We did not see any paths anywhere. It is very true that before arriving at this one you have to cross the river and the inlet at the bottom of the bay.

M. Gareau, engineer, is ordered to carry out the project of the plain of Vallé Amboak, otherwise Plaine de Santé, to fill in the shallows and to make the drainings and clearings necessary to make the air healthier and the land suitable for cultivation. He will make the necessary buildings and erect a fort on the mountain overlooking the plain.

Prosper Cultru – An Emperor of Madagascar

It is understood that for the ease of movement, he will have the top of the mountain razed, all the woods cut down, and the ditches at the foot of the mountain filled in for the government building and other necessary houses. Done in our general camp, at La Plaine, on 21 July 1774.

Thereagainst 58,000 liv.

State of the expenses of the Plain for the works which were built there in accordance with the order above, stopped on August 1, 1775.

- All the bleeding and filling of marshes are works on which nothing can be seen because they do not appear, or very little.

A cut for a canal at the foot of the mountains, on the Forges side at 250 toises, the clearing of the woods and filling of the marshes, 14,000 days of work at 20 s. per day 14,000 liv.

The building with six ordinary huts 1,400

The hospital in palisades 800

The department stores' in palisades 1,200

- These buildings, located on the left bank of the river, are abandoned and completely rotten.

Fort Auguste on the mountain 2,000

Cutting of the mountain, abatising the woods 1,000

Construction of twelve huts 920

- The Auguste fort is an enclosure of palisades 7 to 8 feet high set in the ground and stopped at the end by a piece of wood which holds them in place. It is a square of 50 toises on each side, in which there are some huts. The whole thing is rotten.

Filling in the swamp to build government and establishment of the Royal Garden 3,400

- The garden exists and seemed to us to be quite well kept.

There are a few very green and beautiful coffee plants.

The government 11,300

The canal to squeeze the boats 1,000

The bakery 200

Forges 360

The different parks and hen houses on the island 84

97,154 liv.

The plan of the plain is attached to the protocol.

- The government is a building 70 feet long and 30 feet wide, built of large piles 8 to 10 feet high, driven into the ground, stopped at the top by a crosspiece, a very light framework; although covered with shingles from the Île de France, it is planked top and bottom with local wood. The whole thing is rotten, uninhabitable in the bad season. All the other buildings are equally rotten. As for the channel to squeeze the boats, it was made by nature and can only have been cleaned.

It is ordered to M. Gareau, engineer, to recognize the building of the palisades and stores built in Ramonnier, Angousavé and Angontsy by M. Corby, officer of our corps, to appreciate them and to carry them on his general state of his register.

Done in our government, on the 1st of July 1774.

Thereagainst 97,154 liv.

Statement of expenses made to Ramonnier.

At the source of the Tingueballe River, a square palisade and two stores 640

The same applies to Angousavé, in the interior of the island 400

- There has never been anyone in these positions... Unnecessary expenditure.

At Antonguin, 34 leagues inland, a square palisade, two stores and an ox yard 488

98,682 liv

The plan is attached.

- M. Corby stayed for two months in this post with five or six volunteers, then he was abandoned.

Establishment of the Manahar trading posts (July 1774). 1,252 liv.

- It is unoccupied.

Gareau is ordered to go to Massoualé, in the country of the Sambarives, in order to build the necessary buildings and a fort, this establishment becoming necessary both for the ease of communication of Louisbourg with Angontsy

and Voémar and for the protection of the boats which would be sent for the trade.

At the Plaine de Santé, 7 August 1774.

Thereagainst 99,934 liv.

Statement of expenses, etc., of Massoulé.

A square fort with its buildings 1,808

The surrounding clearings, paths and water drainage 1,488

103,228 liv.

The plan is attached.

- This post is situated approximately opposite Manahar, on the other side of the bay. Sieur de la Boulaye cadet stayed there for two or three months with three volunteers. It has been abandoned for some time.

Orders from Baron de Benyowszky to M. Gareau.

The chiefs of the province of Voémar having asked us to form an establishment there to promote trade, but as such an establishment without a communication could only be very disadvantageous to the interests of His Majesty,

We order Sieur Gareau to draw up a plan of the ordinary road and to have the roads made which would be necessary as well as the bridges which would be needed. This road must start from Mahaler and lead to Angontsy.

At the Plaine de Santé, 1 September 1774.

Thereagainst 103,228 liv.

Statement of expenses used for the establishment of the Angoutsy trading post, in accordance with the above order.

The clearing of the land of 300 square toises, bleeding and filling of the shallows in 5,000 days at 15 sols 3,750

The construction of Fort Maurice, containing the government, a store and barracks, all in strong wood 3,600

The digging of a fountain 800

111,378 liv.

- This post is located to the north and outside the bay, on the coast; it is very good to keep for milking rice and oxen;

but we think that it can have no other communication with Louisbourg for the export of goods than by sea and that the expenses carried in the statements for a communication road from this post to the chief town were made in pure loss.

(Order given on 25 December 1774 to Sieur Gareau, passing through Foulepointe, on board the *Coureur*, to draw up a plan of the town and the fort.

Passing through Tamatave, he will do the same operation as well as in Manourou. - The following is a statement of the expenses incurred in these places).

- We did not see anything new done in Foulepointe or Tamatave. Everything is old and fallen apart and can only have been repaired.
- The post of Manourou is to the south of Tamatave and the baron has never held anyone there.

Order given on 4 February 1776 to Gareau, to have the road from Louisbourg to Foulpointe cleaned and widened.

This is followed by the statement of expenditure.

Being essential to have two roads for communication with the west coast so that the Seclaves, in a time of war, by capturing one, cannot forbid us the other, it is ordered to Sieur Gareau de Boispréaux to trace one at the exit of the woods of Angouan which will lead to Moringano, chief town of the province of Savassi, people allied to our government.

In our government, at La Plaine, 10 April 1776.

Note: As it is essential to make every effort to save money in this operation because of the few means that remain to be used, M. Gareau will be satisfied with making an ordinary path by cutting down woods to open up the day.

State of the expenses employed to open the communication of Angouan with Moringano according to the above order.

Thereagainst 116,502 liv.
40 blacks employed 54 days to cut down the woods, fill the ditches and clean the passage, at 15 sols per day 1,620

- A useless expense, like all the others that have been made in this area.

State of the expenses made by the officers, engineers employed to make the discoveries and the reconnaissances of the coasts of the island, as well as the course of the rivers in the interior of the country.

1° A journey to the south to reconnoitre Tamatave, Manourou, Manansatan and the islands of Sainte-Luce..... 4,600 liv.

- This journey to the south was made by sea on the Kings' senault ¹ le *Coureur*, I am assured.

2° M. Mayeur commissioned by M. Gareau to discover the interior of the island, from Louisbourg to Bombetoc 2,800

- Sieur le Mayeur told us that he had only been able to penetrate the interior of the island up to 15 leagues from Bombetoc.

3° Messrs Mayeur and Corby, commissioned and sent to the North Cape, one by land, the other by sea, with 160 armed men. Employed 7 full months on their mission, making discoveries and acquiring a port on the west coast of the island 13,060 liv.

- This expense seems considerable to us, the 160 armed men were blacks who were given one rifle each for 45 days of service and they fed themselves.

4° Several short trips to reconnoitre the paths and courses of rivers 2,856

5° Extraordinary expenditure without account 1,200

- Almost all expenses could be counted and included in this one.

142,638 liv.

State of the expenses made for the construction of the redoubt at the Mahertony plain.

800 men for three days at 10 sols per day 1,200

In fascine fences, gabions 86

To the carpenters 80

Maintenance and repair of instruments and tools and their decay 2,600

Total **146,584 liv.**

- This is the plain where Fort St. John is situated, which is a very small enclosure made of 4 foot high piles with a small ditch which is spanned with a few huts inside and outside. The whole thing is rotten.

¹ A 'senault' is a 'snaw', or 'snow' – a sort of brig.

In the year one thousand seven hundred and seventy-five, on the second of September, we, the undersigned officers of the Benyowszky volunteer corps, present at the death of M. Gareau de Boispréaux, engineer, certify and attest to having found the engineer's book or protocol, where the last words written on page 40 were as follows : Total, one hundred and forty-six thousand five hundred and eighty-four livres, in witness whereof, at the end of the said page, we have countersigned to serve and to be worth as is reasonable. Signed: Certain de Vézin, lieutenant; Popéguin, surgeon-major, and Larmina, quartermaster.

For a true copy of the original :
Signed: Baron DE BENYOWSZKY.

Table of expenses from 1 September 1775 to the last December of the said year.

22 frame houses, 30 feet by 18 feet, at 220 livres per square, four thousand four hundred livres 4,400liv.

- These are huts made of palisades set in the ground and covered with leaves. They serve as a storehouse and lodging for the officers, the troops, the King's employees, and some free Negresses. They are placed in two or three rows, and this is what forms the town of Louisbourg.

Total expenditure from 1 Sept. to 31 Dec. 1775 28,928 liv. 10 sols.

I, the undersigned, officer in the Benyowszky volunteer corps, in charge of the engineering detail, acting as engineer geographer attached to the said corps, certify the present table of expenses as true.

Last day of December 1775, at Louisbourg, island of Madagascar. Signed: ROZIÈRES.

For a true copy of the original :
Signed: Baron DE BENYOWSZKY.
For copy: BELLECOMBE, CHEVREAU.

ARCHIVES OF THE MINISTRY OF COLONIES. MADAGASCAR COLLECTION. C5,
CARTON 6

Excerpts from two pieces included under this title:

ESTABLISHMENT IN MADAGASCAR

POOR RESULTS OF ESTABLISHMENT

I.- Trip to Madagascar.

(Unsigned report, from La Pérouse, commander of the ship *Iphigénie*, Sept. 1776)

I took command of the King's ship, the *Iphigénie*, at the beginning of September. I was enjoined, by the instructions of M. le chevalier de Ternay, to go to Madagascar at the orders of M. de Bellecombe and to bring back his packages to the Île de France. I left Bourbon with the *Consolante* on the 10th of September and anchored at Foulpointe on the 17th... (*The rest is identical to exhibit II.*)

II.- Eastern colonies. - Madagascar.

On the 19th of the month we left at three o'clock in the afternoon for Antongil Bay, where I anchored on the 21st. I had been preceded by the *Consolante* by a day and, when I went ashore, Messrs de Bellecombe and Chevreau had already been recognised at the head of the troops as inspectors of Madagascar. The French settlement called Louisbourg is on a spit of land between the port of Choiseul and the Tingballe River. This peninsula is about three hundred toises wide; the river is only about four feet deep and the sea about the same, so that in high tides everything is covered with water, except for one hundred square toises which Baron de Benyowszky had filled in and raised by about three or four feet, and in this space is situated the so-called government house, Fort Louis and the huts used as storehouses, barracks and accommodation for the administration officers. Fort Louis, situated forty toises to the east of the government, is nine toises long

by twelve wide with three bastions of three toises by two and a half. In each bastion is a cannon presented to a gun-port made in the palisades.

The construction of this fort consists of palisades planted in the sand, projecting about four feet out of the ground. There is a second enclosure, about eighteen feet from the first, the palisades of which also extend out four feet. Between the two enclosures, at the foot of the first enclosure, is a sandy bank of about three feet, which may be called a *glacis*. All the palisades have been rotted by dampness, and the value of this fort, when it was new, cannot be more than one hundred pistols, since fifty palisades cost only one rifle. There must also have been a thousand or twelve hundred days of volunteers to prepare the ground.

In the interior of the fort are palisade buildings, covered in straw, much like the black huts of the inhabitants of the Île de France.

DIMENSIONS

One vessel for two officers. Length, 21 feet; width, 10 feet.

One store. Length, 28 feet; width, 10 feet.

Barracks for 25 men. Length, 40 feet; width, 10 feet.

A powder magazine of palisades, covered in straw. Length, 40 feet, width, 7 feet.

A guardhouse. Length, 10 feet; width, 7 feet.

The palisades of these various buildings are also rotten, and as I have already supposed the ground prepared, they cannot be valued at more than fifty rifles, which, at fifteen livres, make seven hundred and fifty livres. Total sum of the fort and the buildings, including the twelve hundred days of volunteers at ten sols, the price which was fixed for them when they were paid, two thousand three hundred and fifty livres. M. de Benyowszky evaluates it at one hundred pistols more. The total circumference of this fort, including the bastions, is fifty-one toises.

Forty toises to the west of the fort, as I have already said, is the government. It is a house without storey, built of palisades, squared, covered with straw, planked inside, panelled with mats, and capped with canvas. It is about sixty feet long and twenty-two feet wide, and is divided into three rooms: the middle one is a hall, on the left is the Baroness's room, and on the

right is a room divided into two. On one side is Mlle. Ensky's lodging; the other is a sort of office which served as a study for the baron during the stay of Messrs. de Bellecombe and Chevreau. To the right of the house is a pavilion of the same height as the main hut, twenty feet square, also built of squared palisades, planked, panelled in mats and covered in straw, having a small chimney and forming only one room which served as a study for M. the Baron de Benyowszky and where Messrs Bellecombe and Chevreau slept.

To the left is a pavilion begun of the same size as the previous one, but divided into two rooms and covered with shingles which were sent from the Île de France. In front, and in the same line as the pavilion on the right, is a palisaded kitchen; and opposite the main building, about ten toises away, is a shed supported by palisades and covered in straw, where some workmen are working. To the east of this shed are two small streets about thirty toises long, bordered on both sides by palisaded huts covered in straw, about twelve feet high, not counting the roof, and serving as accommodation for all the officers and employees and as stores for all the King's effects. On the point of the peninsula, on the sea side, is the hospital, which is falling into ruin and which Messrs. de Bellecombe and Chevreau have decided should be placed inland, about a league and a half away, as will be said below. I estimate the cost of the various buildings at Louisbourg, including the fort, at twenty-five thousand livres; but it should be noted that everything, with the exception of the government, needs to be rebuilt, as the dampness has rotted all the palisades... The palisades that are put in the ground are rotten in two years; one cannot dig two feet without finding water...

I left on 28 September for the Plaine de Santé (a name which hardly suits this establishment). I accompanied Messrs de Bellecombe, Chevreau and Benyowszky. The four of us were in a pirogue and were preceded by two others who carried our provisions and some soldiers who followed us with an interpreter. We made in ten hours seven leagues in this river which is everywhere from one hundred and fifty to one hundred and eighty toises wide and begins to drop off at one league from Louisbourg. The banks are then fifteen to eighteen feet high. The country is very open and this river flows for ten leagues in a very pretty plain, the land of which is sandy, but covered with grasses called *fataque*...

In the journey from Louisbourg to the Plain, there are at least ten islands, all very green, covered with the same grasses or shrubs as the banks of the river, and of the most agreeable aspect... Everything had seemed charming in the voyage during the first six leagues. We had rested and dined at Fort Saint-Jean. This post, situated three and a half leagues by the river, but only a league and a half by land, is a square of about eight toises, surrounded by a simple row of palisades which are not pointed at the end and on which I was afraid to lean to look into the river. Inside there is a hut for the officer, forming two rooms built of palisades and covered with straw, and next to it a small kitchen of straw. Outside the fort, about thirty paces away, is a palisaded building also covered in straw, serving as barracks. The total cost of this establishment may be from four to five hundred livres... The seven or eight soldiers who occupy this post, although they looked almost as sick as the others, assure us that they were better off there than at Louisbourg... The artillery of Fort Saint-Jean is two small cannons with a capacity of one pound of bullets and two *pierriers*. We left very satisfied and made another two and a half leagues through the most beautiful country, encountering from time to time the dwellings of blacks. I counted thirteen small hamlets from Louisbourg to the Plain. At last, about five o'clock, the course of the river led us between mountains; we went on for about a league and arrived at this Plaine de Santé, which is situated at the end of a basin surrounded by very high mountains, always covered with fog. We all judged this place to be the most unhealthy of all those we had hitherto travelled. All the clouds, since Louisbourg, go and condense into rain in this basin, and I am persuaded that there are not ten serene days in the year. The military position is also badly chosen: one can very easily be surprised... The so-called fort called Fort Auguste is situated on the point of a sugar-loaf mountain from which one can only shoot at crows... This Fort Auguste is, like Fort Saint-Jean, a square of eight toises surrounded by palisades which are completely rotten and in an even worse state than what we have seen. In the square there are three bad straw huts for barracks and kitchens. One goes up there by one hundred and fifty steps and the artillery, composed of four guns of three pounds of bullets, can only beat the birds which rise up to the level of the mountain. At the foot

of this gloomy place is the establishment: it is a hut of fifty by thirty feet, without floor, built of palisades and covered with shingles which came from the Île de France three years ago, and which are entirely rotten with humidity. They usually last twelve to fifteen years in our islands and are already out of order in Madagascar. The palisades which form the walls of this hut are rotten and a house built fifty years ago would not look as dilapidated as the one I am describing... Add to this hut a kitchen made of straw and there you have the town of the Plaine de Santé traced on the various plans.

On the other side of the river are a straw building called a hospital and another of the same kind, which is called a barracks, in such a pitiful state that the baron advised us not to go there. M. de Bellecombe always asked where the town was, and only stopped his jokes when he went to bed. When we got up, we could not discover the mountains covered with fog... We re-embarked at ten o'clock... and arrived at Louisbourg after a journey of four hours. The bay of Antongil and the adjacent country are entirely devastated and the country is infinitely more miserable than at Foulpointe. I was assured that at no time could Baron de Benyowszky send either rice or oxen to the Île de France, as he never had enough for his subsistence. His interpreter Mayeur treated one hundred and sixty-eight of them towards Cape Amber. This was the time when the king's herd was most numerous. And the various wars that have devastated the country have not provided M. de Benyowszky with fifty oxen for plunder and have wiped out all the other resources of subsistence that this country provided for him...

In conversation with M. de Benyowszky about the little use that France would get from the stay he had made here, he answered me: "That a lesson of two millions was not expensive to teach the ministry that nothing could be done in small in Madagascar, but that if one wanted, on private funds, to have here a small navy, to give it moreover two millions to spend per annum and to maintain its corps at six hundred men (which supposes four to five hundred recruit men per annum), he believed that, in twenty years, this colony would have already made great progress." I represented to him that, at four thousand leagues from the metropolis, one could not choose, to establish oneself, a country where five men out of six die in two years, where what remains is weak, convalescent and incapable of military or agricultural work. I could have taken as an example these eighty men, none of whom can handle a rifle or make a movement of exercise. He himself agreed that he had not been

able to instruct them, because they were continually in hospital. Finally, I remained persuaded that the forty millions and the twelve thousand men which would be sent to him in twenty years, if his plan were followed, would be added to the loss which France has already made, and that at that time the king would not have in Madagascar three hundred colonists, and buildings and fortifications which could be valued at a million. I asked M. de Benyowszky what his views might have been on arriving in Madagascar. He replied: "To reduce the people to do what the king would like, and that he had never well known the intentions of the government in this respect, that moreover he knew well that it was easier to conquer a colony from the enemies than to form a new one." I agreed with him on this truth, which can be even less disputed if we take Antongil Bay as an example, but I am very far from believing that the stay of M. de Benyowszky increased the dependence of the blacks on us. They were previously entirely subject to the will of the governor of the Île de France.

As for the road to Bombetoc, I ascertained that at no time had it been traced, that no European had made it, and M. de Benyowszky having ordered the man named Mayeur, his interpreter, to go and trade in oxen, this man took his way by the north to the seaside, and went to the west coast. de Benyowszky having ordered the man named Mayeur, his interpreter, to go and deal with oxen on the west coast, this man took his way north to the edge of the sea, and advanced by this way to twelve leagues from Bombetoc, from where he returned with a herd of one hundred and sixty-eight oxen to the bay of Antongil.

I will not enter into any details of the internal administration of this establishment. I saw the king's effects piled up without any order in straw stores, exposed to humidity and all other possible accidents. M. de Benyowszky told me that it was not his business. However, I have seen his name everywhere. I believe that Messrs de Bellecombe and Chevreau will only have very unsatisfactory accounts to give on this article. As for the estates, I was responsible for claiming that of M. Dubourg. All my research in this regard has been useless, as well as that of Messrs Chevreau and Coquereau, the authorising officer, and I would just as soon go to New Zealand to claim the inheritance of M. Marion. ¹

1 The French explorer Marion du Fresne was killed in 1772 while exploring New Zealand

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GLOSSARY

of placenames and persons

Please note: not every personal or placename is listed here, only those that may be important yet obscure. Personal surnames beginning with ‘de’, or ‘des’ have been sequenced according to the next word – i.e. ‘de Boispréaux’ appears in the ‘B’s

Adelsheim, ‘Baron’	A colleague of Benyovszky, who joined him in the second Madagascar expedition. ‘A German gentleman’
d’Aiguillon, Emmanuel	Minister of Foreign Affairs from 1770-74
Angontsy	Settlement in NE Madagascar, about 50kms east of Antongil Bay
Antamaroas	Malagasy people – the Antaimoro, based on east coast, south of Antongil. Also named by Benyovszky ‘Saphirobays’
Antongil	Bay in NE Madagascar, at the head of which lies the present town of Maroantsetra
Antonguin	Settlement, around 160kms west of Antongil, somewhere in the region of Antanambao
des Assises, [La Grive ²]	(also rendered Desassises) Appointed by Maillart to investigate Benyovszky’s activities
Barlow, Nathaniel	English trader based in Macao, China
de Bellecombe	French civil servant, sent by Sartine to audit Benyovszky’s colony on Madagascar
Besse	Benyovszky’s treasurer on Madagascar
Beti	Queen of one of the Malagasy peoples, ca. 1750
de Boispréaux	Asst engineer
Bolsheretsk	Small town in south Kamchatka, once the peninsula’s capital.
Bombetok	River and bay on the west coast of Madagascar, at same latitude as Antongil (see above). Now known as Betsiboka.
Bourdé	Captain of a merchant ship, who had visited Benyovszky’s colony in 1775
de Boynes, Pierre	Minister of the Navy from 1771-74
Cagliostro, Alessandro	Italian magician, adventurer and trickster (1743-1795)
Cap St Sebastian	Cape in extreme north-west of Madagascar, now known as Tanjon’ Androntany
Cape Amber	The northernmost cape on Madagascar

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de Castries, Charles	French marshal, Secretary of French Navy, 1780-87
Chekavka	A small harbour, west of the town of Bolsheretsk (see above)
de Chevillard	Unknown person, possible transcriber of Benyovszky's manuscript
Chevreau	French civil servant, sent by Sartine to audit Benyovszky's colony on Madagascar
Coquereau	A man accompanying Bellecombe and Chevreau, who helped them with their audit on Madagascar.
de Cossigny, Joseph-Francois	French engineer and horticulturalist who had an interest in Mauritius
Csurin, Maxim	Ship captain, based on Kamchatka
David, Pierre	Governor of Mauritius, 1746-1753
Dianmanou	Chief of a small Malagasy clan near Antongil
Dumas, Jean-Daniel	Governor of Mauritius, 1767-1768
Fiume	Now known as Rijeka, in Croatia
Fort Auguste	Somewhere in the vicinity of Antongil where Benyovszky claimed to have built a fort
Fort Dauphin	Settlement at the southern tip of Madagascar, now known as Taolagnaro
Fort St Jean	Somewhere in the vicinity of Antongil where Benyovszky claimed to have built a fort
Fort de Volontaires	A place, named by Benyovszky, on the shores of Bombatok Bay (see above) Name is used for a bay and a fort.
Foulepointe	Situated on the east coast of Madagascar, next to the present town of Mahavelona
Glemet	Chief trader at Fort Dauphin
Hiavy	Chief of a Malagasy clan based around Mahavelona
Ile d'Aguilde	Unknown – an island on which Benyovszky claimed to have established an outpost. Presumably south of Antongil (see above)
Ile de France	Another name for the island of Mauritius
de Kerguelen, Yves-Joseph	French naval officer and explorer (1734-1797)
La Bigorne	Former French soldier (aka 'Filet'), favourite of Queen Beti
de la Pérouse, Jean-Francois	French naval officer and explorer (1741-1788)
de la Vigne-Buisson, [Alexis?]	Commander of the French port of Lorient
Lambouin	Chief of a Malagasy people around Cap Sebastien

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Larcher, Captin	French army captain who led the troops who killed Benyovszky
le Bon, Simon	French ‘Bishop of Mettelopolis’ based in Macao
de Lessart, Antoine	French finance/interior/foreign minister (1741-1792)
Lorient	Port on the Brittany coast of France
Louisbourg	The name of Benyovszky’s first settlement on Antongil Bay
de Lozier-Bouvet, Jean-Baptiste	Governor of Mauritius, 1753-1755
Maillart-Dumesle, Jacques	‘Intendant’ / senior administrator on Mauritius. Also referred to as ‘Maillart’
Manahar	Settlement on east Coast of Madagascar, now known as Mananara
Mananding	Chief of a small Malagasy clan near Antongil
Marange	Engineer
Marigny	A captain of Benyovszky’s ‘Volunteers’, former captain of a dragoons regiment
Marin	A captain of Benyovszky’s ‘Volunteers’, former captain of a Canadian regiment
Marion du Fresne, Marc-Joseph	French privateer, East India trade and explorer. Died New Zealand 1772
Maroce island	aka Ile d’Aiguillon. Now known as Nosy Mangabe, in Antongil Bay, Madagascar
Marovoay	Settlement on Madagascar at head of Bombatok Bay (see above)
Massoualé	A small settlement, now known as Masoala, across the bay from Mananara (see above)
de Maudave, Fayd’herbe	French army officer, established trading colony on Madagascar (1725-1777)
Mayeur	Interpreter employed by Benyovszky
Meder, Magnus	(aka Meyder) Russian Admiralty doctor, exiled to Kamchatka 1765; accompanied Benyovszky to Madagascar
Mlle Henska	Sister of Benyovszky’s wife Zusanna (surname also rendered as Hönsch)
de Modave	(see de Maudave)
Morungana	Unknown – described by Benyovszky as being on the west coast of Madagascar
Neuhof, Theodore de	German adventurer and fraudster, briefly ‘King of Corsica’ (1694-1756)
Nilov, Colonel	Commander of Kamchatka, died 1771

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Nilova, Aphanasia	Supposed daughter of Colonel Nilov (see above)
Panov, Vasily	Russian Guards officer, exiled to Kamchatka 1770
Poivre, Pierre	French botanist, active on Mauritius (1719-1786)
Port de Boynes	Benyovszky's other name for Antongil (see above) – named after Pierre de Boynes (see above)
Port Louis	Capital of the island of Mauritius
de Praslin, Cesar	French naval minister from 1766-70
Raoul	Chief of a small Malagasy clan near Antongil
de Robien	Representative of the French [trading] Company at Macao
des Roches, Francois	Governor of Mauritius 1772-1776. Also known as de Ternay.
de Rochon. Alexis-Marie	French astronomer, physicist and traveller (1741-1817)
Ryoumin, Ivan	Kamchtaka chancellery clerk
de Saint-Hilaire, Captain	Captain of French merchant fleet ca. 1773
Sainte-Marie island	Island off the east coast of Madagascar, now known as Nosy Boraha
Sakalaves	Malagasy people – the Sakalava, ruling almost the entire western half of Madagascar
Sambarives	Malagasy people, so described by Benyovszky: apparently lived near Manahar
de Sanglier	One of Benyovszky's captains on Madagascar
Santé, Plaine de	An area about 20kms east of 'Fort St Jean' (see above)
Saphirobays	(see Antamaroas)
de Sartine, Antoine	French Navy minister from 1774-1780
de Souillac, Francois	Governor of Mauritius, 1779-1780
Stepanov, Ippolit	Russian military officer, exiled to Kamchatka
Tamatave	On east coast of Madagascar, south of 'Foulepointe' (see above). Now a large town known as Toamasina
de Ternay, Charles	Governor of Mauritius, 1772-1776
Tinguebale	River in NE Madagascar, flowing into Antongil Bay; Makagasy name is Antainambalana
de Tromelin, Chevalier de	One of several others, all naval officers by that name, flourished 1735-1840
Turgot, Anne-Robert-Jacques	French minister for Navy in 1774, later Controller-General of Finance

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de Vergennes, Charles	French Foreign Minister from 1774
Vohémar	Settlement in NE Madagascar, about 165kms from the northern cape.
Vrbové	Town in present-day Slovakia, birthplace of Benyovszky
Windbladh, August	Swedish officer, imprisoned on Kamchatka 1770