

THE WHEEL OF FORTUNE IN EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY FRANCE:
THE LOTTERY, CONSUMPTION, AND POLITICS

by

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List of Abbreviations

AN	Archives nationales
BN	Bibliothèque nationale

Chapter 1:

Introduction

Lotteries are as old as history itself, with accounts of various types of small lotteries going back to the Greeks and Romans, but modern lotteries first took hold in the wealthy commercial city-states of early modern Italy, most notably in Renaissance Genoa and Venice. Modern lotteries developed and thrived in the Italian city-states of northern Italy because they were a part and parcel of modern urbanization, commercial wealth, and strong centralization of states. They were large-scale financial and commercial enterprises with complex and dynamic wagering systems for monetary prizes. They required, and were a reflection of, the urban, commercial, and dynamic environments in which they took place. Large urban populations provided a large, concentrated consumer base for a proper economy of scale to make the lotteries sufficiently profitable, and these urban areas had economies far enough removed from scarcity for individuals to be able to spend excess wealth on lottery tickets. Strong and centralized state structures established an authority with enough power and legitimacy to police and enforce the lotteries. They gave consumers confidence that they would get paid if they were to win. Modern lotteries needed strong states, but they also required rulers who were willing to tap into this new economic wealth by the non-traditional lotteries. Rulers in sixteenth-century

Genoa and Venice began to approve large-scale lotteries for public works projects. For example, Venice used a lottery to fund the building of the famous Rialto Bridge over the Grand Canal.¹

From Italy, lotteries then spread along trade routes into Amsterdam, Bruges, and London. They first made their way to France in 1539 when François I approved the first legal lottery in France, but they did not become permanent fixtures there until the reign of Louis XV.² This dissertation is a history of lotteries in eighteenth-century France. I narrate this history as it emerged through the convergence of two forces that transformed France in the eighteenth century: the consumer revolution and a changing political culture. The rise of the lotteries was intimately connected to both of these forces. The broad consumer demand for lottery tickets as it manifested itself in the eighteenth century simply would not have been possible without the consumer revolution; meanwhile the easing of the regulatory regime of the lotteries by the monarchy was a product of the dramatically changing political culture under the Old Regime.

French lotteries first took the form of onetime events to raise money for individual building projects or to solidify state coffers in times of severe fiscal crisis, normally during wars. Lotteries made many appearances throughout the seventeenth century, but they were always intermittent and irregular.³ There were a couple reasons for this. First, there was religious anxiety over playing with fate. Fate and providence were thought to be God's prerogative alone. Tampering with fate through lotteries, or any gambling for that matter, was seen as an affront to God's will. This strand of anxiety

¹ Robert Muchembled, "The Wheel of Fortune: Lotteries and Modernism in Fifteenth to Seventeenth Century Europe," in *Lotteries in Europe: Five Centuries of History*, edited by Bruno Bernard (Brussels: Belgian National Lottery, 1995), 19-52.

² Ibid., 25-28.

³ Ibid., 33-42.

receded over the early modern period and was rarely mentioned by the eighteenth century. The second, more serious, and long-lasting concern was the Christian charitable imperative. Moralists and theologians argued that lotteries appealed to human vanity and people's desire to reach above their true status. They argued that rather than wasting one's money on this vanity, the money would be better used for charity. These more conservative writers argued that lotteries appealed to selfish instincts rather than altruistic instincts.⁴ But there was another more liberal moral strain that produced a series of important published texts immediately before and after the turn of the century. These writers argued for a compromised, utilitarian position that would become the dominant moral paradigm during most of the eighteenth century. For them, lotteries could be either good or bad depending on the ultimate use of the money raised through them.⁵

The liberal moralists around the turn of the century may have laid the groundwork for permanent lotteries in France, but another factor was needed for the Italian lotteries to take root: the consumer revolution. It was not until the vast economic expansion and the consumer revolution of the eighteenth century that lotteries became embedded within the fabric of French daily life. Eighteenth-century France saw an explosion in consumption and material wealth.⁶ Material goods which had previously only been consumed by elites were now consumed by a broader cross section of French society. People across

⁴ For a discussion of these religious notions about gambling, see John Dunkley, *Gambling: A Social and Moral Problem in France, 1685-1792* (Oxford: The Voltaire Foundation, 1985), 57-90; and Gerda Reith, *The Age of Chance: Gambling and Western Culture* (New York: Routledge, 1999), 12-33.

⁵ Jean Leclerc, *Réflexions sur ce qu'on appelle bonheur et malheur en matière de loteries et sur le bon usage qu'on peut en faire* (Amsterdam, 1696); Claude-François Menestrier *Dissertation sur les loteries* (Lyon, 1700); and Jean Barbeyrac *Traité du jeu, où l'on examine les principales questions de droit naturel et de morale qui ont rapport à cette matière* (Amsterdam, 1709).

⁶ Michael Kwass, "Big Hair: A Wig History of Consumption in Eighteenth-Century France," *American Historical Review* 111 (2006): 631-659; and Daniel Roche, *A History of Everyday Things: The Birth of Consumption in France, 1600-1800*, translated by Brian Pearce (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000).

France, both geographically and socially, had more furniture, books, and silverware in their homes, and they consumed a more diverse diet than ever before, including colonial goods like sugar and coffee.

Cookbooks are a good example of the new consumer goods because they are both possessed and represent dreams of possession. With demand rising for more sophisticated, diverse, and interesting food, cookbooks were being published at an unprecedented rate and reaching an ever wider circulation. As Daniel Roche states, “Cookbooks succeeded because they captured the desire for a better life.”⁷ The vast expansion in the market for cookbooks reflected the growing consumer demands and expectations of the century. These eighteenth-century cookbooks reached these consumers through a vast network of hawkers who peddled cheap editions in the streets.⁸

Like a cookbook, a lottery ticket was both a very real material possession itself and represented the imagination of possession of all that the consumer revolution offered. And just as cookbooks circulated ever more widely throughout the century, so too did lottery tickets as lotteries became a regular part of everyday Parisian life. On drawing days, Parisians eagerly crowded the streets of Paris surrounding the lottery offices to hear the winning numbers announced immediately after they were drawn. A print from a 1701 almanac (Image 1.1) shows a street outside a lottery office bustling with activity. It also depicts nicely the dual aspects of the materiality and imaginary of the lotteries. It portrays all the material objects associated with lotteries, while also portraying the palpable sense of excitement and anticipation in the air. The commoners in the foreground busily check their ticket numbers and excitedly show their tickets to others,

⁷ Daniel Roche, *France in the Enlightenment*, translated by Arthur Goldhammer (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1998), 619.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 618-621.

including a woman who appears to be a laundress holding a basket. They focus on the material tickets, which are nothing more than a representation of what might come. But the image is not limited to merely what might be. A man on crutches in the upper left is in the act of possessing. With his ticket in one hand, his other hand is extended to receive his prize.

But consumers did not have to go to the lottery; the lottery also came to them. Agents of lotteries, in the form of licensed lottery ticket street hawkers, could be found on nearly every corner of Paris and may have seemed unavoidable. (See Image 1.2.) Contemporaries complained about the constant shouts of street peddlers encouraging those passing by to test their luck with the purchase of a lottery ticket. “One cannot take ten steps without encountering them [ticket peddlers],” complained one irate pedestrian in 1763.⁹ These agents of the lotteries had as their task to turn the consumer’s imagination of consumption into the actual consumption of lottery tickets.

The history of the lotteries converged with the history of the consumer revolution, but it also converged with French political history. Lotteries were regulated by the French monarchy, and their growth and expansion was dependent upon the monarchy. It was the monarchy’s prerogative alone to determine whether or not to allow a lottery, whether it would be local or national, how many tickets it could sell, how much profit it could make, and so forth. In the end, the legal lottery market was completely at the mercy of the government and its regulation.¹⁰ During the century, the monarchy’s policy

⁹ Henri de Goyon de La Plombanie, *L’homme en société, ou Nouvelles vues politiques et économiques pour porter la population au plus haut degré en France* (Amsterdam, 1763), 83. “On ne peut pas faire dix pas sans en rencontrer.”

¹⁰ Élisabeth Belmas, *Jouer autrefois: essai sur le jeu dans la France moderne (XVIe-XVIIIe siècle)* (Paris: Champ Vallon, 2006), 287-335; Dunkley, *Gambling: A Social and Moral Problem in France, 1685-1792*, 34-56; Francis Freudlich, *Le monde du jeu à Paris (1715-1800)* (Paris: Albin Michel, 1995), 36-44.

toward lotteries generally fluctuated between the two extremes: complete proscription on the one hand and unmitigated legal tolerance on the other. There was without a doubt, however, a tendency over the course of the eighteenth century to move toward a wider acceptance and use of lotteries as their vast fiscal potential became apparent. The French monarchy became ever more active in the lottery market, moving from regulation of charitable lotteries to direct operation of lotteries when the monarchy expropriated the whole legal lottery market with the Royal Lottery in 1776. With the Royal Lottery, the lotteries were now a part of the French monarchy and its bureaucracy, and the monarchy was directly engaged with the consumer revolution as the monarchy became a merchant peddling lottery tickets. As the lotteries became ever more closely associated with the French monarchy, they became political as opponents of the monarchy used them to attack the monarchy. Much like taxes, religion, and state finance, the lotteries became a site of political contestation in the eighteenth century.

One of the broadest questions this dissertation will ask is how the lotteries in France went from relatively insignificant institutions at the beginning of the eighteenth century to a relatively significant part of the state's fiscal apparatus by the time of the French Revolution. The lottery market and the lottery system—the one economic and the other political—always intersected in the eighteenth century, but where that intersection occurred and whether it led to growth of the lottery market or its contraction changed drastically.¹¹ It is the goal of the dissertation to flesh out the nature of that fluctuating

¹¹ Throughout this dissertation, I refer to the broad consumer market for lottery tickets as the “lottery market” by which I mean to encapsulate the totality of the consumer market, legal and illegal. And I refer to the state's regulatory regime toward the lottery market as the “lottery system.” In that respect, the lottery system was essentially political. The formal, legal regulations of the lottery system were often determined from larger political and cultural expectations. Just as the political culture of the eighteenth century changed, so too did the lottery system. Throughout most of the early modern France, the lottery system was one of curtailment of the lottery market. The political position of the state was geared toward limiting

intersection of economics and politics in eighteenth-century France as the lottery system continued to open the regulatory valve that let the lottery market flood France. But if the lotteries represent two convergent forces, the one economic and the other political, then the lotteries also force us to examine the larger economic and political forces at play. How was it that the two converged to create the large lottery enterprises of the eighteenth century? Was it the larger economic and market forces of the consumer revolution that then allowed for the eighteenth-century lotteries, or was it the changing political culture that allowed that allowed for the expansion of the lottery market?

In the end, I am not sure I will be able to answer this chicken-and-egg question. The lotteries needed both the consumer revolution and the political will to create the lottery boom, and thus the lotteries stood at the point of convergence between the history of the consumer revolution and the new political culture. My concern is not which is more important, but rather how the two were connected. For example, what do the lotteries reveal about the connections between the changing consumer culture and the changing political culture of eighteenth-century France? The lotteries allow us to attempt a direct answer to this question since they were both very much a part of the new consumer culture as well as deeply political. Many consumer goods became politically symbolic, but by the end of the Old Regime, the Royal Lottery had directly linked the French monarchy as a merchant to the consumers of lottery tickets. In the end, the monarchy did not create consumer demand for lottery tickets, but it did allow that

the lottery market to charitable lotteries and state lotteries during exigent state fiscal need. In the early part of the eighteenth century, however, the lottery system moved from a preventive stance of curtailment to an interventionist stance of lottery market expansion. The consumer revolution of the eighteenth century led to an exponential growth in the lottery market which the French monarchy in turn sought to exploit fiscally. The lottery market and its expansion was no longer a danger to be feared; it had become an opportunity that the cash-strapped monarchy could exploit if it manipulated the politics correctly.

demand to flourish. And if lottery tickets did not alter French politics, they did reinforce it and gave a concrete mold to its shape. I will argue in this dissertation that these economic changes of the century were intimately involved with the political changes. The two were central to each other, not tangential. Changes in economics and consumption drove changes in political culture at least as much as changes in political culture drove changes in economics and culture.

Political Culture and the New Economic History

For many years, French history was dominated by Marxist and Annales interpretative models.¹² The two schools were different, yet complementary in many ways. Both of these models privileged economic and social history over political and cultural history, and both saw early modern France as a period of little socio-economic change, even stagnation. The Annales school saw the French economy as deeply rooted within larger social structures which were very slow to change. They emphasized history of the *longue durée* because they assumed that change was so gradual that it could be measured only over generations or even centuries. Individuals were not so much historical actors as much as they were prisoners of a *société immobile*. They were trapped within larger societal structures and *mentalités*. With the Annales emphasis on very gradual and imperceptible social and economic change, its practitioners tended to see only modest differences between medieval and early modern history. These

¹² André Burguière, *L'école des annales: une histoire intellectuelle* (Paris: O Jacob, 2006); Peter Burke, *The French Historical Revolution: The Annales School, 1929-89* (Cambridge: Polity, 1990); Pierre Chaunu, *Reflets et miroirs de l'histoire* (Paris: Economica, 1990); and Traian Stoianovich, *French Historical Method: The Annales Paradigm* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1976).

historians thus undertook thorough examinations of French agriculture and the peasantry, ostensibly largely unchanged from the middle ages. What the Annales historians found was an agricultural society and peasantry locked into a “traditional” and largely medieval *mentalité*. Peasants abided to medieval notions of subsistence farming and a fixed, unchanging social hierarchy embedded within a naturalized inegalitarian ethos. They had no concept of production for markets, nor did they have any desire. The Annales historians argued that early moderns did not seek out new technologies, new techniques, or any form of material improvement or social amelioration. They were locked into their rigid society as they always had been and always would be.¹³ With this rigid *mentalité*, there was simply little hope of innovation, economic growth, or change in any significant way. The Annales historians saw early modern France as being defined by stagnation and a rather boring tedium—it was anything but dynamic.

The Marxist interpretation had an even more bleak socio-economic assessment, emphasizing not stagnation but outright crisis. Ernest Labrousse wrote the classic Marxist formulation in which he argued that the Old Regime was trapped in a feudal economic order which prevented real economic growth, but to this model, he added a modestly rising population. The combination of rising population and a stagnant economy led to dramatically lower standards of living. To this notion of economic stagnation, later scholars added an even more dire situation: Malthusian models of demographic crisis. Labrousse’s model of standard demographic growth coupled with economic stagnation became a demographic and economic crisis in which the French

¹³ For some of the classic Annales texts, see Marc Bloch, *French Rural History*, translated by Janet Sondheimer (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1966); Fernand Braudel, *Civilization and Capitalism, 15th-18th Century*, translated by Sian Reynolds (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992 [1979]); and Emmanuel Le Roy Lauderie, *The French Peasantry, 1450-1660*, translated by Alan Shirdan (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987).

population catapulted past French agricultural production. For Labrousse and the many scholars after him who followed this model, eighteenth-century France was an economic disaster and a century of prolonged economic crisis, suffering, and despair which ultimately led to the French Revolution. It was the Revolution that finally destroyed the feudal economic and political constraints of the Old Regime and ushered in modern capitalism.¹⁴ Like the Annales school, the Marxist historians privileged economic and social history as the true driving historical force with political and cultural history as merely derivative.

The single most important historian for putting to rest the emphasis on socio-economic history was François Furet with the publication of his *Penser la Révolution Française* in 1978. Furet began his work by arguing pointedly in support of Tocqueville's observation that French society and economy under the July Monarchy in 1830 were essentially the same as Old Regime France. In other words, the French Revolution had no significant socio-economic impact, rather Furet argues that the single most important aspect of the Revolution was its political impact. The collapse of the French monarchy left a power vacuum, and as the monarchy exited the political scene, others sought to fill that now empty political void through language. It was the use of language in search of political legitimacy that became the defining characteristic of the French Revolution.¹⁵ In short, politics was transformed by the Revolution, with French society and economy largely unchanged.

¹⁴ Ernest Labrousse, *Esquisse du mouvement des prix et des revenus en France au XVIII^e siècle*, 2 vols. (Paris: Librairie Dalloz, 1933); for an overview of the economic history scholarship, see George Grantham, "The French Cliometric Revolution: A Survey of Cliometric Contributions to French Economic History," *European Review of Economic History* 1 (1997): 353-405; and Philip T. Hoffman and Jean-Laurent Rosenthal, "New Work in French Economic History," *French Historical Studies* 23 (2000): 439-453.

¹⁵ François Furet, *Interpreting the French Revolution*, translated by Elborg Forster (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981).

Furet's emphasis on the political history of the French Revolution was widely influential and pushed a whole generation of historians in a new direction. Like Furet, Lynn Hunt saw the Revolution as primarily political, but she expanded Furet's definition of what constituted politics beyond political discourse. Using an expansive definition, Hunt defined political culture as the common values, expectations, and implicit rules that molded and shaped collective action and understanding. Things that seemed unimportant to Furet became politically significant for Hunt. The revolutionary cockade or changes in the calendar were not trivial; rather they were symbolically important and politically significant. The everyday practices, objects, and experiences of common people were just as significant as political speeches of legislators.¹⁶ Hunt agrees with Furet that the Revolution was primarily political but she expanded Furet's definition of politics to a broader political culture.

Keith Baker pushed the political culture scholarship even further. He argued that politics is always about competing claims. Those claims are always voiced through language, so that politics is, in the final analysis, linguistically and discursively constructed. This notion of politics and political culture as entirely discursive has a few important implications, both for Baker and for historians after him. First, if politics is always discursively constructed by competing political claims, then the discursive political context is important. Furet and Hunt examined the political culture of the French Revolution in relative isolation from the Old Regime—always careful to avoid the teleological flaws of Marxists and the static *longue durée* of the Annales school. Baker on the other hand suggests that the Old Regime is central to understanding the politics of

¹⁶ Lynn Hunt, *Politics, Culture, and Class in the French Revolution* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984).

the French Revolution. It was the political culture and the political context of the Old Regime which shaped and formed revolutionary politics. Baker's emphasis on language and discourse had a second important implication. While he encourages deeper research into the Old Regime, he adamantly maintains that any examination of the Old Regime remain political. Baker focuses research on the Old Regime, yet he continues to reject the older Marxist and Annales concern for social and economic change.¹⁷ Baker's work challenged scholars to reexamine the Old Regime while maintaining the primacy of politics and the new emphasis on political culture.

Baker's work is deeply influenced by Jürgen Habermas and his theory of the rise of the public sphere. Habermas sees the rise of public opinion as intimately associated with the rise of literacy, commerce, and capitalism associated with the nascent bourgeoisie of the mid-eighteenth century. There was then a connection between socio-economic change, critical reasoning, and political contestation within the public sphere as the bourgeoisie asserted its new sense of socio-economic significance and projected it politically.¹⁸ Baker is very much concerned with this notion of the public sphere and public opinion, but in toeing the same line as Hunt and Furet, he argues for "public opinion as a political invention, rather than as a sociological function."¹⁹ He adopts Habermas' notion of the public sphere while rejecting its socio-economic origins. Baker sees the idea of the public and public opinion as transforming the ideological and political underpinnings of the Old Regime. Under absolutism, the monarchy was the only legitimate political authority. But Baker argues that from the 1750s to the Revolution,

¹⁷ Keith Michael Baker, *Inventing the French Revolution: Essays on French Political Culture in the Eighteenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990).

¹⁸ Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, translated by Thomas Burger (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1989).

¹⁹ Baker, *Inventing the French Revolution*, 168.

the debates over Jansenism, taxation, and the grain trade spread beyond the traditional, closed world of corporatism and absolutism into the public sphere as these various groups appealed to the public rather than seeing the monarchy as exclusive source of political legitimacy. Public opinion attained such political legitimacy and authority that even the monarchy began appealing to the public for support against its opponents. As Baker argues, “the result was an implicit new system of authority, in which the government and its opponents competed to appeal to “the public” and to claim the judgment of “public opinion” on their behalf.²⁰ It is worth emphasizing here that for Baker this political culture of the Old Regime and French Revolution that privileged the public was purely an ideological and political construct with no economic or social function or reference.

After Baker, Hunt, and Furet, political culture took on a significantly broader meaning as far as what constituted political culture and where it might occur. After Baker, historians began to look into the Old Regime for the emergence of this nascent political culture, and they have found plenty of examples of political contention in unexpected places. Dale Van Kley has examined parlementaire struggles with the crown over Jansenism and found a hotly debated political discourse in which both sides openly appealed to the public to push the legitimacy of their positions. Sara Maza found a heated public debate within Old Regime legal history as attorneys competed to win the approval of the public on behalf of their clients. And Dena Goodman merged in many ways Baker’s emphasis on the Old Regime with Hunt’s concern for cultural practice by placing the Enlightenment salon of the Old Regime at the center of the new politics.²¹

²⁰ Ibid., 173.

²¹ Dena Goodman, *The Republic of Letters: A Cultural History of the French Enlightenment* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994); Sarah Maza, *Private Lives and Public Affairs: The Causes Célèbres of Prerevolutionary France* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993); and Dale Van Kley, *The*

This new political culture scholarship opened up many new and fruitful approaches to French political history, yet it has done so at the expense of casting aside questions of social and economic history. This near complete detachment of the political from the socio-economic is unfortunate, because there has been a tremendous amount of new research that has greatly expanded our understanding of French society and economy in the eighteenth century.²² This new research has opened up many lines of inquiry that are not altogether different from many of the questions asked by scholars of political culture, and indeed, the two fields of research often seem to complement each other so much so that it is almost befuddling that scholars have not engaged the two together more often.

Economic historians have challenged nearly every aspect of the rather bleak Annales and Marxist depiction of the French economy. David Weir, for example, has shown that France on the eve of the French Revolution and even during the first year or so of the Revolution was not experiencing a catastrophic economic collapse. In fact, the French economy was in a period of expansion in the years immediately before 1789, not contraction. The price spike in grain prices around the time of the Revolution was most likely the effect of political uncertainty rather than underlying economic and demographic causes.²³ Other economists and historians have agreed that the notion of French economic “backwardness” or “retardation,” especially in contrast to England, are simply not accurate. And historians in particular have taken interest in the consumer

Religious Origins of the French Revolution: From Calvin to the Civil Constitution, 1560-1791 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996).

²² Geoff Eley, *A Crooked Line: From Cultural History to a History of Society* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2005); and William H. Sewell Jr., *Logics of History: Social Theory and Social Transformation* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005).

²³ David Weir, “Les crises économiques de la Révolution française,” *Annales E.S.C.* 46 (1991): 917-947.

revolution of the eighteenth century. We now know that most people in France were much better off than previous models assumed. People had more material goods like linen, time pieces, and forks than in previous generations, and they consumed more sugar, tobacco, and coffee than ever before.²⁴ Rather than a century of bleak economic and demographic crisis, historians and economists now see eighteenth-century France as a dynamic period of great economic expansion.

Like the historians of political culture, economic historians have begun to examine Old Regime finance under a new lens to begin to challenge the previous notions of economic stagnation. The fiscal crisis which preceded the Revolution made perfect sense under the old paradigm of a century of economic stagnation, but it is much more perplexing under the new model of economic prosperity. How was it that a fiscal crisis on such a scale that it destabilized the entirety of the French political system was able to occur during a time of great economic expansion? Another way to ask this question is to ask how it was that a time which saw individuals accumulate unprecedented wealth and material well-being coincided with the bankruptcy of the French state? Among the many reasons offered by way of explanation, there are three that are worth consideration here because of their direct relevance to the history of the lotteries. First, it had been held as a truism that French subjects under the Old Regime were so heavily taxed that the monarchy simply could not squeeze any more money out of its subjects in the form of taxation. Second, scholars had argued that the political division under the Old Regime

²⁴ Cissie Fairchilds, "The Production and Marketing of Populuxe Goods in Eighteenth-Century Paris," in *Consumption and the World of Goods*, edited by John Brewer and Roy Porter (London: Routledge, 1993); Annik Pardailhé-Galabrun, *The Birth of Intimacy: Privacy and Domestic Life in Early Modern Paris*, translated by Jocelyn Phelps (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1991); Roche, *A History of Everyday Things*; Daniel Roche, *The People of Paris: An Essay in Popular Culture in the 18th Century*, translated by Marie Evans (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987).

between spending and taxing caused fundamental financial problems which were only exacerbated by the deep political divisions of the Old Regime. And third, many scholars have previously argued that the credit and financial markets were simply not large enough or sophisticated enough to keep up with the financial demands of the monarchy toward the end of the Old Regime.

In trying to explain the monarchy's financial apocalypse which preceded the Revolution, scholars have often noted the onerous taxation levels under the Old Regime. Taxes were assumed to be so high that the monarchy simply had no room left to raise taxes in order to avert catastrophe. The notion that taxes under the Old Regime were oppressive goes back to the Old Regime discourses as the monarchy's opponents, notably the parlementaires, opposed new taxes and held themselves up as the defenders of the public. Historians too have codified this notion. Labrousse, for example, gave evidence, which we now know was flawed, of a stagnant economy with a growing population combined with steady taxation. This confluence of circumstances meant that the totality of each individual's taxes was actually much higher at the end of the Old Regime than at the beginning.²⁵ With taxes seeming to have soared during the course of the century, the monarchy was simply unable to extract any more revenue from its subjects. Under recent scrutiny, however, this myth has been overturned. In fact, scholars have shown that, at worst, French tax obligations remained constant, and tax burdens may have even declined

²⁵ For an explanation of this notion of oppressive taxation, see Michael Kwass, *Privilege and the Politics of Taxation in Eighteenth-Century France: Liberté, Égalité, Fiscalité* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 1-3.

by the end of the Old Regime relative to the early part of the century. We also know that the French were actually taxed significantly less than the English in per capita terms.²⁶

There has been a long tradition of seeing large-scale financial and credit markets as a uniquely modern aspect of capitalism, and the story is often told that it was the lack of these financial markets that prevented industrialization and economic growth. As this “traditional story” is told, in the premodern period almost all debt and financial obligations were personal. What few impersonal financial instruments existed were very limited. This lack of impersonal finance necessarily limited economic growth, but it also prevented the French monarchy from borrowing sufficient funds to finance its operations.²⁷

The new picture that economic historians have painted is quite the opposite. The French financial markets were thriving at the end of the Old Regime. There was plenty of money in the capital markets, but no one was willing to lend it to the monarchy. If the financial markets were capable of funding the monarchy’s needs but were unwilling to do so, the question then becomes, why? The clear answer is that lenders simply no longer had any confidence in the French monarchy. In order to borrow money, the lenders had to believe that the monarchy was capable of raising enough money to repay the loans, or at least continue to make the interest payments. By the 1780s, the monarchy was already paying significantly higher interest rates because of the growing default risk that lenders

²⁶ See Peter Mathias and Patrick K. O’Brien, “Taxation in England and France, 1715-1810,” *Journal of European Economic History* 5 (1976), 601-650; and for a thorough discussion of the politics of taxation in France, see Kwass, *Privilege and the Politics of Taxation*.

²⁷ The history of this “traditional story” is explained in, Philip T. Hoffman, Gilles Postal-Vinay, and Jean-Laurent Rosenthal, “Information and Economic History: How the Credit Market in Old Regime Paris Forces Us to Rethink the Transition to Capitalism,” *American Historical Review* 104 (1999): 69-72.

assumed to be inherent in the transactions.²⁸ In other words, lenders understood very well that the monarchy held unsustainable amounts of debt at its current revenue rates.

Economic historians have thus shown that the French economy was expanding, the French were, if anything, relatively under taxed, and there were large financial markets from which the monarchy could have borrowed. These findings have only caused scholars looking at the “financial origins” of the Revolution even more problems. Why was it that under these favorable circumstances the French monarchy was unable to reform its fiscal and taxation system in order to raise revenue and balance its budget? Historians agree that the root problem was in the division between the spending and taxation apparatus of the French state. The monarchy was the sole power in charge of spending with relatively no input from other groups, including the parlements. Yet any new tax measures had to be approved by groups other than the monarchy, most notably the parlements. In other words, the monarchy could spend money unilaterally, but in order to raise money, it had to engage in parliamentary politics. And the parlements seemed to resist the monarchy’s taxation policies at every turn, especially in the second half of the eighteenth century. It is true that the monarchy could force tax edicts to be registered through a *lit de justice*, but that was a political headache for the monarchy and often seemed to create more political problems than it was worth.²⁹ A political solution was never reached because the parlements wanted the monarchy to give up significant amounts of power. The monarchy was simply unwilling to do so, and by the time the

²⁸ George V. Taylor, “The Paris Bourse on the Eve of the Revolution, 1781-1789,” *American Historical Review* 67 (1962): 951-977; François R. Velde and David Weir, “The Financial Market and Government Debt Policy in France, 1746-1793,” *Journal of Economic History* 52 (1992), 1-39; Hoffman, Postel-Vinay, and Rosenthal, “Information and Economic History,” 69-94; and Philip T. Hoffman, Gilles Postel-Vinay, and Jean-Laurent Rosenthal, *Priceless Markets: The Political Economy of Credit in Paris, 1660-1870* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2000).

²⁹ Sarah Hanley, *The Lit de Justice of the Kings of France: Constitutional Ideology in Legend, Ritual, and Discourse* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983).

monarchy conceded, it had already crossed the financial Rubicon. After the failure to control the political situation in 1787 with the calling of the Assembly of Notables, the monarchy finally acquiesced by agreeing to a meeting of the Estates General, but by time it did so, the monarchy's finances were in a tailspin and the monarchy had lost control of the political situation. In the end, this has led many historians to argue that the French monarchy's bankruptcy of 1788 had its root cause in French politics, not the French economy.³⁰ The French monarchy was simply unable to find a viable political solution to its revenue problem. Its revenue shortfall in turn led to a budgetary shortfall. It had previously filled the budgetary shortfall by borrowing money, but that source of funds evaporated as the monarchy's debts grew and it seemed unlikely that a political compromise could be reached.

In the end, the work of the new economic history and the new emphasis on political culture seem to complement each other quite well. Economic historians argue that the underlying French economy was healthy and even expanding. In other words, the economy was not the source of political upheaval. Meanwhile, political historians have also argued that socio-economic changes were not the source for political upheaval. Economic historians have uncovered dynamic economic change, and political historians have uncovered dynamic political change. Yet neither group really engages the other or considers whether or not there might be some connection between the new economics

³⁰ Joël Félix, "The Financial Origins of the French Revolution," in Peter R. Campbell, ed., *The Origins of the French Revolution* (New York: Palgrave, 2006); Kathryn Norberg, "The French Fiscal Crisis of 1788 and the Financial Origins of the Revolution of 1789," in Philip T. Hoffman and Kathryn Norberg, eds., *Fiscal Crises, Liberty, and Representative Government, 1450-1789* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1994); and Eugene Nelson White, "Was There a Solution to the Ancien Regime's Financial Dilemma?" *Journal of Economic History* 49 (1989): 545-568.

and the new politics. One of the goals of this dissertation is to engage with both of these fields through a history of the lotteries.

The history of material culture and consumption, particularly the work of Daniel Roche, represents one way of examining changes in economic and social patterns of eighteenth-century France while also opening up new questions about the impact of those changing patterns on French culture more broadly. Roche has used estate inventories to count, categorize, and track the changes in material culture over the course of the eighteenth century, and he has shown definitively that there was indeed a massive expansion in the number of goods that people possessed.³¹ But perhaps even more interestingly, Roche has made important arguments about the connection between changes in material goods and larger shifts in culture. He argues that changes in consumption reflected deeper social and cultural changes, but patterns of consumption can initiate those changes as well. He argues, for example, that the proliferation of clothing and clothing options led to a “culture of appearances” and even a “revolution of appearances” in which the outward appearance of one’s clothing no longer necessarily reflected one’s social status, which in turn was suppose to reflect one’s essential qualities.³² Because the same clothes became widely available to a much larger segment of society, individuals began to differentiate themselves through fashion and style. Roche argues that this was ultimately a conflict between a “society of civility,” in which clothing represented status, and a “society of consumption,” in which clothing represented the individual. Beginning in the eighteenth century almost simultaneously with the consumer revolution, many thinkers, most notably Rousseau, were deeply

³¹ Roche, *A History of Everyday Things*; and Roche, *France in the Enlightenment*, 551-555.

³² Daniel Roche, *The Culture of Clothing: Dress and Fashion in the Ancien Regime*, translated by Jean Birrell (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994).

apprehensive about this new “society of consumption,” fearing that it alienated individuals and that this material alienation undermined some deeper essence of humanity. But Roche sees the consumer revolution as liberating. Rather than the older Christian economy and the “society of civility,” in which people filled their predetermined roles in society, consumerism freed them from these traditional constraints with a turn toward a more individualistic society.³³ Roche thus shows not only that changes in material culture reflect larger cultural and social changes, but that they are also capable of effecting such changes. It is worth pointing out, however, that Roche deals with individuals and society without necessarily drawing direct political implications.

In writing this history of the lotteries, I will draw on many different aspects of the scholarship and methodology mentioned here. In fact, the lotteries almost dictate a wide scholarly orientation. They hold a seemingly unique place at the intersection of the histories of consumption, the economy, and political culture. Lottery tickets were consumer products, which consumers bought with the hope of transforming their world as they knew it. They were also part and parcel of the rising financial capitalism of the century.³⁴ The popular imagination linked lotteries to things such as insurance, commerce, and complex loan agreements.³⁵ And regulatory aspects of lotteries made them deeply political as well. But consideration of any one of those aspects would obscure the totality of the lotteries’ significance and their ability to shed light on the history of eighteenth-century France. It is absolutely necessary to examine the larger

³³ Roche, *France in the Enlightenment*, 555-561.

³⁴ Larry Neal, *The Rise of Financial Capitalism: International Capital Markets in the Age of Reason* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 93-97.

³⁵ Lorraine Daston, *Classical Probability in the Enlightenment* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988), 163-178.

socio-economic significance of the consumer revolution with the lotteries, but it would be intellectually disingenuous not to examine the political discourse surrounding the lotteries in the public sphere. In this way, the lotteries brought consumption, even the consuming practices of illiterate workers, into the public sphere. The lotteries are an example of the dynamic and synergistic relationship between socio-economic and political change.

There were so many moving parts and the socio-economic and political were so closely linked that the history of the lotteries represents almost a case study of how the two fields are interconnected.

Chapter Overview

The monarchy made decisions at various times throughout the eighteenth century that dramatically altered the lottery system. These decisions mark convenient bookmarks for the organization of this dissertation. Chapter 2 begins with the first of these decisions in 1727, when the French monarchy granted privileges to three charitable lotteries in Paris and suppressed all other lotteries. These lotteries, known as the *trois petites loteries*, operated continuously and perpetually to help fund religious communities, build churches, and operate the Paris foundlings' hospital. The monarchy's action of 1727 was a direct effort to control and maximize the benefits of the lottery market. This chapter tells the story of just how successful these efforts were as lotteries experienced explosive growth. Mid-century saw a veritable lottery boom as these lotteries became a regular part of daily life in eighteenth-century Paris. But this unprecedented growth also led to many confrontations and challenges as others sought their share of the pie, and in doing so, they

encroached on the lottery market and began to subvert the traditional, charitable groundings of the lotteries. As this chapter shows, the growth of these lotteries revealed the massive economic potential of lotteries and ultimately laid the groundwork for the course that the lottery system would take in the rest of the century.

The next two chapters tell the story of the growth of the lotteries beyond Paris as the monarchy founded the first national lotteries in France. Chapter 3 discusses the Loterie de l'École Royale Militaire from 1757 to 1776. This lottery was founded in 1757 to help fund the fledgling and relatively new Royal Military School. At the time, it was easily the largest lottery in the history of Europe. Chapter 3 follows the intellectual and cultural tensions that this new lottery created as it sought to use very modern techniques of commerce and finance to support the very traditional ends of military education of the French nobility. The Loterie de l'École Militaire had to resolve these tensions, but it also had to work out the practical and administrative details of the first lottery to operate throughout the entirety of the French kingdom. This lottery was a critical bridge between the *trois loteries* and the Royal Lottery as it attempted to maintain some semblance of charitableness, like the religious lotteries. And although it was a royal lottery, it did not benefit the monarchy directly. As I show, the Loterie de l'École Militaire was France's first national lottery, and it set the intellectual and administrative structure for the Royal Lottery.

Chapter 4 discusses the Royal Lottery from its founding in 1776 until the outbreak of the French Revolution in 1789. 1776 was a watershed in the development of the lottery system in eighteenth-century France as the state unabashedly nationalized the whole lottery system. They were able to do it unabashedly, because they crafted it

around a discourse of liberty and the consumer public. The monarchy self-consciously used this language to smooth over any rough edges that may have persisted with those who might have opposed its actions. It was a measure meant to completely dominate the lottery market and help the monarchy's own fiscal well-being. I argue that while the Royal Lottery was designed to strengthen the monarchy's financial position it paradoxically weakened its political position by using public opinion to sell its market domination.

Chapter 5 follows the course of the Royal Lottery from the events immediately preceding the French Revolution through the suppression of the lottery in November 1793. This very short period of time saw the most open public debate over the lottery in French history. It also shows the power of the monarchy's discursive construction of the Royal Lottery as revolutionaries struggled with trying to reconcile the institution of the lottery with the ideology of the French Revolution and the reality of state finances. On the one hand, the Royal Lottery was self-consciously fashioned by the monarchy as a free and voluntary institution. On the other hand, the lottery was closely associated with the monarchy and was so thoroughly discursively linked to the monarchy that few dared to defend it. In the end, the Royal Lottery was not suppressed until inflation became so rampant and the economy so horrendous that the lottery became financially insignificant. I argue that only after the economic conditions rendered it insignificant did the revolutionaries suppress what was then called the National Lottery.

From the beginning of the eighteenth century until the end of 1793, the number of wheels of fortune and the amount of money that circulated figuratively through them expanded exponentially with the expansion of the French economy. From 1727 to 1793,

the French lottery system went from relative insignificance to being significant enough that Talleyrand could claim it as one of the leading causes of the French Revolution. The lotteries expanded with the French economy. It was part and parcel of the growing economy and the rise of financial capitalism. But it was also part and parcel of the increasingly complex and contentious politics of eighteenth-century France. The French monarchy sought to fuse the two together by appealing to the discourse of the consumer public to push the lotteries politically and thus tap the increasing economic wealth of the century. But there were consequences. As I will show, the monarchy's success at exploiting lotteries was a direct result of the republican language of consumerist volunteerism it used to support its lottery policies; however, that same language undermined the political foundations of the *absolutist* monarchy. In the end, the lotteries allow us to see how economic expansion, particularly that of financial capitalism, coincided directly with the expansion and growth of a new political culture. In the rise of the lotteries, economic ideology and political ideology became inextricably intertwined.



Image 1.1: *Almanach pour 1701: Bureau de la loterie* (1701, Musée Carnavalet, Paris).



Image 1.2: *Royal Lottery Hawker* (From Bernard, *Lotteries in Europe*, 72).

Chapter 2:

Les Trois Petites Loteries: Between Christian Charity and Fiscal Expediency

The first legal lottery in France was granted permission by François I in 1539.¹ Between 1539 and the early part of the eighteenth century, a set of expectations and norms developed around the use of lotteries. In 1723, Jacques Savary des Brûlons outlined these accepted uses in the *Dictionnaire universel de commerce*. First, lotteries had become a common “kind of commerce through which the Sovereigns have found resources either to repair their finances exhausted by long wars or to pay off the state’s debts.” Lotteries could also be used, according to the *Dictionnaire universel*, “to support establishments useful to the Public, or in order to complete Basilicas and Churches.”² There were two accepted uses: lotteries could be used by the government in exigent fiscal need or for charity and charitable projects, broadly construed. But there was also a second principle implicit in both of Savary’s statements and reflected in the history of lotteries in France up to that point: lotteries had to be limited and finite in nature; they could not operate without end. Once the government’s exigent need receded so too

¹ For the early history of lotteries in France, see Élisabeth Belmas, *Jouer autrefois: Essai sur le jeu dans la France moderne (XVIe-XVIIIe siècle)* (Paris: Champ-Vallon, 2006), 306-318; René Rouault de la Vigne, *La Loterie à travers les âges et plus particulièrement en France* (Paris, 1934), 14-19.

² Jacques Savary des Brûlons, *Dictionnaire universel de commerce*, 3 vols. (Paris, 1723), 3: 189. “espece de commerce où les Souverains ont trouvé des ressources, soit pour réparer leurs finances épuisées par de longues guerres, soit pour acquitter les dettes de l’État.”; “pour soutenir des établissemens utiles au Public, ou pour achever des Basiliques & des Eglises.”

should the lottery; once the building of a church was finished so too should the lottery.

Lotteries could be used by the government under dire fiscal pressure and for charity, but they had to be temporary.

This model was followed for nearly two hundred years. Lotteries proliferated in the last years of Louis XIV's reign, which ended in 1715, and the beginning of Louis XV's reign as the French monarchy struggled with the economic and fiscal consequences of Louis XIV's numerous and disastrous wars. The number of lotteries may have increased markedly, but the lottery paradigm remained largely unchanged and rather traditional. For example, there was a lottery to help support the construction of a new façade for the Saint-Roch Church held in Paris on November 10, 1705. Image 2.1 portrays one such charitable lottery drawing with an insert of the specific drawing of the Saint-Roch lottery. Image 2.1 is simply, and generically, titled "Les loteries tirées par permission du Roy pour le bien du public, [and] le soulagement des hopitaux" ("The lotteries drawn by permission of the King pour the public well-being, [and] the relief of the hospitals"). The image depicts these early charitable lotteries as equal parts Christian charity and royal majesty. Hovering over the entire image is none other than Louis XIV, surrounded by the traditional trappings of French kingship with his image framed by the words "Ludovicus Magnus Rex Christianissimus" ("Louis the Great, Most Christian King"). Keeping with this very traditional motif, the entire image is also decidedly hierarchical. The king's countenance is at the very top and center. Below the Most Christian King's image are the officials operating the lottery, notably on a raised platform. And then, the spectators are situated at the bottom.

These traditional charitable lotteries became pervasive in Paris. Between 1707 and 1708, the king permitted lotteries for the benefit of four impoverished religious orders: the Abbey of Poissy, the Benedictine monastery at Saint-Marcel, the Abbey of Port-Royal, and the Irish Benedictine monastery at Ypres. The monarchy took away their permission in October of 1708 in part by citing that they had already gone on for over a year.³ The monks of St. Thomas in Paris were given permission to operate a lottery on October 30 and December 9, 1713.⁴ And lotteries were permitted to help support the hospitals in Lyon and Dijon. These were just a few of the many charitable lotteries in the early eighteenth century.⁵ These lotteries all followed the traditional expectations: they were held for charitable purposes and were temporary. Even the lotteries that had lasted for more than just one drawing were generally suppressed after a year or two. The October 27, 1708 order, which suppressed the lotteries for the four religious orders, cited the lotteries' extended existence of over a year as part of the reason for the king's action. In short, no foundation could reasonably expect their charitable lottery to last for very long.

As charitable institutions increasingly turned to lotteries to finance their building projects, there was an increasing sense that the lottery market needed stricter control to ensure the maximum benefit from lotteries. As early as 1713, a royal order noted that the proliferation of lotteries was becoming self-destructive as lotteries began to cannibalize each other through fierce competition.⁶ The monarchy was coming around to the idea that it needed to step into the market to guide it to maximum benefit. The basic paradigm

³ BN, FR 21628, "Arrest du Conseil d'Etat du Roy du 27 Octobre 1708."

⁴ BN, FR 21628, "Arrest du Conseil d'Etat du Roy du 26 Decembre 1716."

⁵ Belmas, *Jouer autrefois*, 306-318.

⁶ BN, FR 21628, "Arrest du Conseil d'Etat du Roy du 29 Mars 1713."

of the lottery system, which had remained largely unchanged since 1539, was irrevocably altered in 1727. In that year, the monarchy completely reorganized the French lottery system around three permanent lotteries which would dominate the lottery market for decades to come. The Loterie des Enfants Trouvés, the Loterie de Saint-Sulpice, and the Loterie des Communautés Religieuses were organized and regulated collectively by the French monarchy with an exclusive and perpetual privilege. The days of the small, ad hoc charitable lottery were gone, as the rise of these three large-scale and permanent lotteries transformed the market for lottery tickets during the second and third quarters of the eighteenth century.

The *trois petites loteries*, also commonly referred to as the *trois loteries* or the *petites loteries*, captured the attention and imagination of common Parisians during the middle decades of the century. Street hawkers did a booming business as consumers ravenously bought up millions of lottery tickets. Revenues exploded. We unfortunately do not have records for the period before 1745, but we do have very good records for the period from 1745 to 1765. And that period, particularly the 1740s and early 1750s saw a lottery boom. The revenues of the Loterie de Saint-Sulpice climbed from 1,537,000 livres in 1745 to 2,891,000 livres in 1749 to 3,733,000 livres in 1752. For the same years, those of the Loterie des Enfants Trouvés soared from 1,138,000 livres to 1,991,000 livres to 2,307,000 livres. And the revenues for the Loterie des Communautés Religieuses rose from 1,127,000 livres to 1,939,000 to 2,289,000 livres, respectively.⁷ Collectively, by 1752 the three lotteries, which had taken in 3,802,000 livres in 1745, had boosted their revenues to 8,329,000 livres. This astounding 119% increase in a mere

⁷ AN, G9 114, “4 Autres Comparaisons” and F 12 795.

seven years is not only a testament to the popularity of lotteries in general but also to how quickly interest in them soared during the middle of the century.

The *trois loteries* were three distinct lotteries run by three distinct organizations, but they shared one common attribute: they were universally recognized as existing for charitable purposes. But with their immense success, challenges arose to that central charitable mission as different groups sought to exploit the lotteries' success for their own financial gain. In this chapter I will examine how the success and growing economy of scale of these lotteries and the proliferation of other large-scale lotteries challenged and affected the original mission and justification of lotteries. I will consider the effect the lottery expansion of mid-century and the subsequent destabilization of the lottery system had on the traditional intellectual, political, and, perhaps above all, moral underpinnings and understandings of the lotteries. I will argue that there was an increasing tension during this mid-century expansion between the traditional charitable ideals of the lotteries and newer ideas of lotteries as instruments of fiscal expediency with less and less charitable pretense. The success and increasing, almost mind-boggling, economy of scale of the *trois petites loteries* magnified the moral discourse surrounding the lotteries on a proportional scale. This lottery expansion, which began with the *trois loteries*, was a pivotal point in the overall history of the lotteries in eighteenth-century France in which the very moral underpinnings of lotteries were challenged and ultimately reformulated under a new, more commercial rubric.

The history of these three charitable lotteries is often sketchy. We have nothing close to a complete record of them. The records we do have often correspond to some new, controversial measure with regard to the lotteries in which there was a flurry of

correspondence and memoranda back and forth between different government officials, lottery administrators, and often outside vested interests. This chapter is based on documents generated by three such events: the “Great Altercation” of the 1740s; the lottery ticket price increase of 1754 in support of the rebuilding of the Sainte-Geneviève Church; and the establishment of the Loterie de l’Hôtel de Ville in 1760. These three events conveniently span the three middle decades of the century. Together they show very nicely how attitudes toward the lotteries evolved over this period.

The Rise and Expansion of the *Trois Petites Loteries*

The *trois petites loteries* were organized collectively in 1727, but all three had started out earlier as smaller lotteries, and often on an ad hoc basis, just like numerous other lotteries. The Loterie des Enfants Trouvés had a particularly long history. Its profits went to support the Hôpital des Enfants Trouvés, which was initially built in 1658 with the help of a lottery permitted by the king.⁸ The early history of this lottery and the hospital is not entirely clear. The lottery seems to have operated off and on through most of the first seventy years or so of its existence. In April 1717, the regent, the Duc d’Orleans, granted permission for the Foundling Hospital to open a new Loterie des Enfants Trouvés, which would begin operations the following May. The monarchy set the ticket price for this lottery at 25 sous. The Foundling Hospital was allowed to keep twenty percent of gross proceeds, with the expenses of operating the lottery to be deducted from that twenty percent and the remaining profit going toward the operation

⁸Rouault de la Vigne, *La Loterie à travers les ages*, 42-43.

and administration of the Hôpital des Enfants Trouvés. The other eighty percent went toward the prize pool and had to be paid out in the form of winning tickets.⁹

That lottery only lasted four months, and was suppressed in favor of a new lottery, the Loterie de l'Hôtel de Ville, the funds from which were meant to pay down government debt.¹⁰ Because of its long history of financial instability and partial bankruptcies, the French monarchy often borrowed money through indirect means, including borrowing money from the municipal government of Paris which in turn borrowed money from French subjects. Most corporate entities could borrow money at cheaper rates than the monarchy itself, so the city would borrow money at lower rates and then turn around and lend it to the monarchy. The numerous lotteries the city operated under the name "Loterie de l'Hôtel de Ville" were thus meant to pay down this debt, and the government regularly acquiesced in granting permission for them.¹¹ This particular Loterie de l'Hôtel de Ville lasted almost three years. In April 1721, the king again granted permission to the Hôpital des Enfants Trouvés to operate a lottery as it had in 1717, with the only difference being that the ticket price was reduced to 20 sous and the hospital was to receive fifteen percent of the lottery sales—and again the expenses of the lottery's operation were to come out of this fifteen percent. The director of the Hôpital Général, who was also the commissioner of the Hôpital des Enfants Trouvés, was charged with overseeing the new Loterie des Enfants Trouvés.¹²

⁹ BN, Joly de Fleury 266, f. 166-170.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ David D. Bien, "Offices, Corps, and a System of State Credit: The Uses of Privilege under the Ancien Régime," in *The Political Culture of the Old Regime*, edited by Keith M. Baker (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), 89-114; David Garrioch, *The Making of Revolutionary Paris* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 130; Kathryn Norberg, "The French Fiscal Crisis of 1788 and the Financial Origins of the Revolution of 1789," in *Fiscal Crises, Liberty, and Representative Government, 1450-1789*, edited by Philip T. Hoffman and Kathryn Norberg (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1994), 261-262.

¹² BN, Joly de Fleury 266, f. 166-170.

The early history of the Loterie des Communautés Religieuses is also not entirely clear. A royal order from the King's Council on October 26, 1720 ordered a detailed accounting for the expenses and receipts of various lotteries granted to the Parisian parishes of Saint Sauveur, Saint Gervais, Saint Martial, Saint Laurent, and the abbeys of Sainte Perine de la Villette, Sainte Basilice, and Saint Sacrement, the "Religieux Théatins," and the Monastère de la Conception. These assorted lotteries were also put under the direct surveillance of the Lieutenant General of police with the drawings held in the Hôtel de Ville. This particular order also makes reference to similar orders on April 30, 1715 and February 26, 1718, so these lotteries were operating as early as 1715 and possibly earlier.¹³ By February 1727 these lotteries had been merged together under the single Loterie de l'Abbaye aux Bois as one of the *trois loteries* permitted by the king.¹⁴ This lottery would ultimately become known as the Loterie des Communautés Religieuses, which would help support impoverished parishes and religious orders for decades to come.¹⁵

In the early eighteenth century, the combination of difficult economic and fiscal times of the end of Louis XIV's reign led to the drying up of funds by the monarchy to help sustain and renovate Paris churches. This fiscal situation combined with the age of many churches in Paris meant that many churches were either falling apart or too small for the current size of the parish population. Stories abounded of churches literally falling apart. Pieces of plaster large enough to kill someone were falling from the

¹³ BN, FR 21628, "Arrest du Conseil d'Etat du Roy du 26 Octobre 1720."

¹⁴ BN, FR 21628, "Arrest du Conseil d'Etat du Roy, du 26 Fevrier 1727."

¹⁵ Charles Philippe d'Albert Luynes, *Mémoires du duc de Luynes sur la cour de Louis XV, 1735-1758* (Paris, 1864), 396-397.

Madeleine church, and the Saint-Donat church was deemed unsafe for use.¹⁶ Meanwhile the famous Saint-Sulpice church was only able to accommodate a small fraction of its parish. Jean-Baptiste-Joseph Languet de Gercy, Saint-Sulpice's curé, was determined to renovate and expand the church, and the church's expansion became his life's mission. Languet was notorious for sparing no expense when it came to his lavish church reconstruction. He was famous for his extraordinary efforts to raise funds for his pet project. His greatest coup came in 1721 when he won the consent of the Duc d'Orleans, the regent, for the parish to operate a lottery to support the renovations and expansion of the Saint-Sulpice church.¹⁷

The Loterie de Saint-Sulpice was the third of what would become the *trois loteries*. Founded in 1721 by the king's *lettres patentes*, the form of this lottery was essentially the same as what would become the standardized procedures for all of the *trois loteries* in 1727. Its tickets sold for 20 sous each, or one livre, with 85 percent of the revenue from ticket sales paid out in winning lots. The other 15 percent of sales went to cover the expenses of operating the lottery with the remainder, after expenses, to be used for the ongoing renovations to the great Saint-Sulpice church.¹⁸

By 1727, there were so many lotteries operating in Paris and the competition so fierce among them that the government felt compelled to consolidate the lottery system. In February of 1727, Louis XV ordered the suppression of the Loterie de l'Hôtel de Ville de Paris, which had operated for almost ten years. The 1727 order noted that there were

¹⁶ John McManners, *Church and Society in Eighteenth-Century France. Vol. 2: The Religion of the People and the Politics of Religion* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 311-316.

¹⁷ Edmund Burke, *The Annual Register, Or, A View of the History, Politics, and Literature for the Year 1763* (London, 1764), 14-15; François Alexandre Aubert de La Chesnaye-Desbois, *Dictionnaire historique des moeurs, usages et coutumes des françois* (Paris, 1767), 3: 312-314.

¹⁸ Max Terrier and Vanier Henriette, *La loterie racontée par l'image, histoire abrégée des blanches, tontines et loteries faites en France de 1539 à 1933* (Paris, 1936), 17.

simply too many lotteries and they “brought considerable harm to one another.” The French monarchy had decided to favor the three charitable lotteries, and from 1727, the Loterie des Enfants Trouvés, the Loterie de l’Abbaye aux Bois (soon to be named the Loterie des Communautés Religieuses), and the Loterie de Saint-Sulpice, (later called the Loterie de Piété) were given the exclusive privilege to operate. Notably, they were also allowed to operate continually and permanently. These three lotteries were still operated independently by the various foundations that they supported, but the government from then on regulated them together. The manner of drawings, the price of the tickets, and the profits that each received from the lottery sales were the same for each of the three lotteries. Even the format of the actual lottery tickets was the same for all three. (See Images 2.3 and 2.4.) And the dates of the drawings were spaced out evenly over the course of the month to prevent cannibalization of the other lotteries’ ticket sales. The Loterie des Enfants Trouvés drew its numbers on the tenth of each month, the Loterie des Communautés Religieuses on the twentieth, and the Loterie de Saint-Sulpice on the thirtieth day of each month.¹⁹ The lotteries were drawn raffle style with each ticket having a unique number. On each of the specified days, a blindfolded child would then pull the winning tickets from a large “wheel of fortune” that was set up in the Grande Salle of the Hôtel de Ville of Paris with the Lieutenant General of police and the archbishop of Paris in attendance. The ceremony was meant to inspire public confidence in the fairness and legitimacy of the drawing, first by using an ostensibly innocent child to pick the tickets, and then by having the drawing in a public space supervised by trusted authority figures, thus offering transparency and legitimacy to the consuming public.

¹⁹ BN, FR 21628, “Arrest du Conseil d’Estat du Roy, du 26 Fevrier 1727.” “se portent un tort considerable les unes aux autres.”

Image 2.5 shows a lottery drawing at the Hôtel de Ville with the public officials supervising from a platform as a blindfolded child draws tickets from the wheel and they are announced to the public. (Also, see Image 2.6.)

The blindfolded child drew numerous tickets for the various winning lots. A winning ticket would have been worth a minimum of 100 livres with the largest winning lot ranging from around 10,000 livres up to 25,000 livres or more, depending upon how many tickets were sold for any particular drawing. Considering that a ticket cost only 20 sous, or 1 livre, the potential return was rather large. Of course, most people who bought tickets won nothing, but as is the case with most lotteries, past and present, the risk/reward ratio was rather low. To lose 1 livre would not hurt most consumers in any kind of significant way, but any type of win would be a huge boost for the average Parisian's finances.

The consumer market for lottery tickets flourished during this period in part because of the overall expanding French economy, consumer market, and increasing amounts of disposable income among an increasingly large cross section of the population. As one historian has said, lotteries flourished in the early modern period as urban areas began to "free themselves of the scarcity of goods."²⁰ Lotteries grew side by side with the overall economy, but lotteries also priced tickets to be accessible to as broad a spectrum of the population as possible. Twenty sous put a lottery ticket within the reach of most Parisians. Even most unskilled day laborers made 20 to 30 sous a day, with skilled workers earning more. Masons averaged around 40 sous a day, while more skilled and experienced masons earned around 50 sous per day. Over the course of the

²⁰ Robert Muchembled, "The Wheel of Fortune: Lotteries and Modernism in Fifteenth to Seventeenth Century Europe," in *Lotteries in Europe: Five Centuries of History*, edited by Bruno Bernard (Brussels: Belgian National Lottery, 1994), 50.

eighteenth century, bread generally averaged 8 to 9 sous for a standard 4-lb. loaf. A typical Parisian family consumed two loaves a day, putting a family's total bread expenses at just under a livre per day—the cost of one lottery ticket.²¹ In 1763, Joachim Faiguet de Villeneuve estimated that the average 25-year-old worker had 110 livres a year left over after paying for food, housing, and clothes. Faiguet also estimated that the same worker at the age of 35 had 199 livres in what we would call discretionary spending, and that amount rose to 412 livres by the age of 50.²² Faiguet's estimates suggest that workers did indeed have a fairly significant amount of disposable income to spend on the ever increasing amount of consumer goods available. And the memoir of Jacques-Louis Ménétra, a Parisian glazier, shows that workers seemed to have had a ready supply of money for small trifles including lottery tickets, of which Ménétra was a regular consumer.²³ At one livre per ticket, lottery tickets for the *trois loteries* were out of the price range of only the poorest Parisians, but for most semi-skilled workers and above, lottery tickets were easily accessible.

Even the poorest Parisians who could not afford a ticket on their own found a way by splitting tickets with others. In his journal of his travels in Paris in 1765, William Cole noted that his French valet, whom he hired for 25 sous per day, had purchased some lottery tickets in common with other workers.²⁴ And the police records are full of disputed cases in which one person claimed a winning ticket and another came forward to claim their right to half of the prize, arguing that they had purchased the ticket in

²¹ Garrioch, *Making of Revolutionary Paris*, 52-53.

²² Daniel Roche, *A History of Everyday Things: The Birth of Consumption in France, 1600-1800*, translated by Brian Pearce (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 62-72.

²³ Jacques-Louis Ménétra, *Journal of My Life*, translated by Arthur Goldhammer (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986), 190-192.

²⁴ William Cole, *A Journal of my Journey to Paris in the Year 1765*, edited by Francis Griffin Stokes (London: Constable & Co, 1931), 32-34, 166.

common with the disputed party for every drawing. Perhaps the largest such case took place in Bordeaux when a Bernard Pisson tried to claim a *gros lot* of 40,000 livres for a December 1769 drawing. It took the lottery receiver a few days to get the money together and in the meantime a M. Varin came forward to claim half of it, arguing that he and Pisson bought the ticket in common as they did for every drawing. The Bordeaux officials ultimately sided with Varin and ordered the 40,000 livres prize split.²⁵ The Pisson-Varin case is perhaps the most interesting case because of the sheer size of the prize, but cases on a much smaller scale occurred regularly throughout the century. Parisians found ways to purchase their lottery tickets, and by mid-century, they purchased more and more tickets every year.

The “Great Altercation” between the *Trois Petites Loteries* and the Comédie

Since the end of Louis XIV’s reign, there had been a precedent for the state to look toward lotteries in times of fiscal and economic hardship. And though the middle of the eighteenth century was generally a time of economic prosperity and expansion, the 1740s, especially 1747-1749, were filled with economic and social turmoil. The French spent an enormous amount of money—nearly one billion livres, about four times the annual budget—fighting the War of Austrian Succession between 1740 and 1748; there were numerous bad harvests; and the French economy had to endure one of the largest and most disruptive military demobilizations up to that time in French history following

²⁵ AN, G9 115, “Contestation du S. Pisson avec le S. Varin au sujet du lot de 40,000 livres.”

the war.²⁶ It was in this context that the administrators of the *trois petites loteries* found themselves engaged in what they referred to as a “great altercation and dispute” with the Comédie Française over the price of their lottery tickets.

In the 1740s, the actors and actresses of the Comédie Française found themselves in a dire financial situation. The theater was carrying a heavy debt load, which was being made worse by annual deficits as a result of lower theater attendance, presumably attributable to the harsh economic times. In order to alleviate their fiscal situation, the actors and actresses requested a suspension of the duty that the Comédie was required to collect and pay to the poor on all of their performances. While the theater had fallen on hard times, the *trois petites loteries* had amazingly remained prosperous and continued to set new profit records year after year. The theater thus proposed making up their poor duty by increasing the price of lottery tickets. The Comédie first proposed the plan in 1742, but it resulted in no serious consideration by the government. The Comédie took up its cause again in 1747 and 1748, but after seven years of war, the government took the matter more seriously.²⁷

The actors began their claim by arguing for their own dire need and then defending their utility as a theater company. They pointed out that they were currently running an annual deficit of just over 7,000 livres, yet the theater was required to pay an amount of between 30,000 and 36,000 livres a year to the Hôtel Dieu and the Hôpital Général—welfare institutions in Paris for the sick and poor respectively. The exact

²⁶ Colin Jones, *The Great Nation: France from Louis XV to Napoleon* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002), 132-45.

²⁷ The collection of letters and responses are unfortunately not very precise. The undated and unsigned copies of memoirs fall into two basic categories: those that support the Comédie and its plan and those that support the lotteries and the status quo. When referring to this collection of documents I will generally refer to the authors of the first kind of document as the lottery administrators and I will refer to the authors of the second type as the actors and actress or the Comédie, since the authors of the collective documents take up those respective positions.

amount of the duty was calculated from previous years' revenue, which had fallen off considerably during the 1740s. The theater thus had to pay the duty based upon much more prosperous previous years even though circumstances had changed quite dramatically. The actors also felt the need to justify themselves and their public usefulness by bluntly stating that, "it speaks well of them [the actors and actresses of the Comédie] of having been formed just as much for the instruction of the people as for their amusement, and of having contributed to the glory of the nation by this multitude of works that it has performed." Far from being superfluous, they argued that they served a very real purpose that was beneficial to the larger French society. They made no argument against the justness of sharing their revenues with the poor. They simply argued that they were no longer capable of doing so. The theater conceded that the administrators of the poor feared an interruption of funds, but they asked rhetorically, "will they not lose it forever with the inevitable fall of the Comédie Française?"²⁸ The theater thus asked for a suspension of the duty so that they could fundamentally improve their fiscal situation and in the end be more useful in the long run to both the poor and the nation.

After fully outlining their own indigence, the theater proposed a "Projet d'indemnité pour les pauvres." The proposal consisted of two parts meant to reassure everyone, not least of which was the monarchy, that their project would raise the necessary funds for the poor while being neither "odious nor onerous to those involved." The first part outlined the ease with which the funds could be attained from the lotteries,

²⁸ BN, Joly de Fleury 266, f. 113-116. "Elle a l'avantage sur eux d'avoir été formé autant pour l'instruction que pour l'amusement des peuples, et d'avoir contribué à la gloire de la nation par cette multitude d'ouvrages qu'elle a consacrés."; "ne le perdront ils pas pour toujours par la chute inévitable de la comédie française?"

and the second part argued along similar lines that a ticket price increase would be well received by the public. It is worth pointing out that they never questioned whether or not the poor were deserving of support; they simply contested where those funds should come from. The “Projet” noted that the three lotteries took a profit of 15% on all lottery sales in order to benefit their individual foundations. The theater proposed simply increasing the ticket price by 20% from 20 sous to 24 sous, and have 15% of that increase go to the poor, thus effectively replacing the funds that the theater had previously given. The *trois loteries* sold around 400,000 livres a month worth of tickets, so a 20% increase, the proposal claimed, would boost revenue by 100,000 livres—a slight miscalculation, since 20% would be only 80,000 livres. At a profit rate of 15%, the 100,000 livres monthly increase would represent 15,000 livres a month or 180,000 livres a year—again based upon the erroneous calculation that a fifth of 400,000 is 100,000. Of course, that amount would be far more than the current amount given by the Comédie, so that even a smaller increase, the proposal argued, of only two sous or even just one sou would provide for 45,000 livres a year—significantly more than the poor currently received from the Comédie.²⁹

Knowing that the government was already stretched fiscally and that the poor had to receive their duty, the theater had to propose some alternative that would be acceptable to all the parties involved. They ultimately settled on an increase in lottery ticket prices, and set out to reassure all interested parties of the ease of implementation. “What’s more,” the actors noted, the lotteries “would collect this sum without it costing them any expense.” Sensing that the proposed price increase would be met with skepticism from the lottery administrators, the proposal ended with an adamant denial of public resistance:

²⁹ Ibid., “rien d’odieux, ni d’onereux pour ceux qui s’y trouveront interessés.”

“an increase so small will never be onerous to the public, nor consequently do any harm to the established lotteries.” Indeed, the actors claimed, “far from the Public being cool to this increase, it will find it a lure, since the lots will be increased proportionally.”³⁰ Shifting the burden of poor relief to the lotteries and consumers of their tickets would more than replace the Comédie’s duty: it would cost the king nothing; it would be very little hassle for the lotteries themselves; and the public would actually embrace it. The actors portrayed this measure as a proverbial win-win situation.

Finding the proposal less than enticing, the directors of the Hôpital des Enfants Trouvés and the Loterie des Enfants Trouvés vehemently and bitterly opposed any ticket price increase designed to relieve the Comédie of its obligation to the poor. In making their case, the lottery administrators leaned heavily upon two ideas: first, the unworthiness of the actors and actresses in contrast to the worthiness of the poor; and second, the expectations and power of lottery ticket consumers. In depicting the actors as unworthy and the poor as worthy, the lottery administrators used a common reference in the eighteenth century. Contemporaries commonly understood that there were two types of poor: the “deserving” and the “undeserving,” and there was a drastic difference between them. Drunkards, able-bodied beggars, and the irreligious were all undeserving of aid, while elderly widows, the infirm, disabled veterans, and orphans were all deserving of charity. And to be sure, foundlings were the one incontestable group of the deserving poor.³¹

³⁰ Ibid., “L’autant plus qu’ils percevroient cette somme sans qu’il leur en coûtât aucun frais.”; “Bien loin que le Public soit refroidi par cette augmentation, il y trouvera un appas, puisque les lots étant augmenter a proportion.”

³¹ Garrioch, *Making of Revolutionary Paris*, 54-56; Olwen H. Hufton, *The Poor of Eighteenth-Century France, 1750-1789* (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1974), 139-143.

The administrators of the Loterie des Enfants Trouvés played on contemporaries' conceptions of foundlings as the most deserving of the poor for their own purposes in this "great altercation." The lottery supported the Foundling Hospital which was formed in 1658 as a branch of the larger Hôpital Général which was founded in Paris in 1656. The Foundling Hospital was the only one of its kind in France, and indeed, the only one in Europe with the exception of Holland. The hospital was deemed necessary in Paris because of the incredible demands placed upon it by the provinces. Each year hundreds and at times thousands of children were sent to Paris for care. Most did not survive the long journey to Paris, but those who did put a huge burden on the hospital system. Indeed, the problem of foundlings increased dramatically over the course of the eighteenth century. In 1680, the Hôpital des Enfants Trouvés cared for 890 children, but by 1740 that number had increased to 5,302; by 1772 it was caring for an astounding 10,634 children.³² Contemporaries, especially government officials, were all too aware of the plight of these children, and the lottery administrators used this awareness to its fullest extent. In their rebuttal, the lottery administrators used the foundlings as an unmovable wall against which to back the actors and actresses. They used every bit of rhetorical verve to contrast the deserving, poor, and helpless foundlings to the undeserving, luxurious, and able-bodied actors.

The rebuttal to the Comédie's proposal took the form of a series of thirteen observations. The very first one drew a sharp contrast between the general suffering throughout France, as a result of the war and difficult economic situation, and the selfish proposal of the actors. In referring to the theater's loss of 7,088 livres between April 10,

³² Hufton, *The Poor of Eighteenth-Century France*, 334-345.

1741 and March 10, 1742, the “Observations” claimed that there was nothing as amazing as how small this loss was when one considered,

the high price of bread and foodstuffs, troops and officers posted abroad, the decrease of horses and carriages in the court, the belt-tightening of families of condition and of the bourgeoisie, and finally the increased amount of illness and death caused by the bad weather. Everyone has suffered. It is not shocking that the actors and actresses of the Comédie take part in the public suffering, and that they have a decrease in profit, when the number of foundlings and poor withdrawn to the Hôpital Général by the excess of this public misery...are overburdened by misery.³³

There was thus misery throughout the kingdom as the king’s troops fought an external war for the safety and glory of France. Everyone in the kingdom suffered, from the most wretched foundling to the very heights of the French court, and yet the actors and actresses of the Comédie complained about losses that were a mere fraction of their budget. And indeed, the first Observation ended by claiming that “there is no decency in these gentlemen in not wanting to suffer at all in these times of misery.”³⁴ In beginning their rebuttal in this way, the lottery administrators not only argued for the unworthiness of the actors and actresses, they went so far as to argue explicitly for their indecency and, implicitly, their immorality. The suffering ostensibly shared by both the poor and the court alike had somehow escaped the Comédie.

The representatives of the lotteries pushed their charges of immorality even further. Not only did the actors refuse to stand united with the rest of the nation in its suffering, they even immersed themselves in a life of luxury. The actors had argued, in

³³ BN, Joly de Fleury 266, f. 122-130, “Observations,” [first observation]. “la cherté du pain et de denrées, les troupes et officiers hors du Royaume, la diminution des équipages et voitures de la cour, le retranchement de dépenses dans les familles de condition et Bourgeoises, enfin un plus grand nombre de maladies et de morte causées par le dérangement des saisons. Tout le monde a souffert, il n’est pas étonnant que les acteurs et actrices des comedies prennent part a la souffrance publique, et qu’ils ayent diminution de profit, tandis que le nombre des enfans trouves, des pauvres retirees a l’hopital general par l’excès de cette misere publique...sont surchargée de miseres.”

³⁴ Ibid., “Observations,” [first observation]. “Il n’y a pas de décence a ces messieurs de ne vouloir rien souffrir dans des tems de miseres.”

part at least, that part of their problem had arisen from the fact that they had lost four or five of their most famous and talented actors and actresses and consequently they drew smaller audiences. The lottery administrators pointed out that, despite this claim of having unworthy members who were driving down their ticket sales, the actors still maintained waiting rooms filled with lavish furniture more appropriate to past times of wealth than the present's day's suffering and indigence. Indeed, they argued that the theaters "have today in spite of the indigence of qualified persons, chamber maids, lackeys, etc; furniture, fine clothes, lace, no less similar to the furniture and clothing of the most distinguished people by birth or dignity."³⁵ Despite the supposed hard times that the theater attempted to evoke, there was no outward sign or appearance of suffering. The lotteries' administrators did not contest the actors' claim of indigence; they simply pointed out the inconsistency between the theater's outward appearance and their claims of hardship. In a word, the actors lived a life of luxury.

Luxury was a highly contentious subject in the eighteenth century, and it had a severely negative connotation, especially by mid-century. As Sarah Maza claims, luxury was often "a convenient code for all of society's perceived problems."³⁶ Luxury was not just an economic reference; it was a moral reference as well, standing for degradation, selfishness, and general immorality. It was exactly these societal and cultural concerns about luxury that the lottery administrators tapped into, thus moving beyond attacking the Comédie's proposal to attacking the very morality of the actors and actresses themselves. The administrators referred to the "immense fortunes" that many of the Comédie's

³⁵ Ibid., "Observations."; "ont aujourd'hui malgré l'indigence des personnes qualifiées, femmes de chambre, laquais etc, des meubles, des habits, des dentelles, tout au moins pareils aux meubles et habillement des personnes les plus distinguées par leur naissance ou par leur dignité."

³⁶ Sarah Maza, "Luxury, Morality, and Social Change: Why There Was No Middle-Class Consciousness in Prerevolutionary France," *The Journal of Modern History* 69 (1997): 217.

members had made and “the luxury which the theater has procured for them [the actors].” Instead of taking from the Loterie des Enfants Trouvés and the poor foundlings whom the lottery supported, the Comédie should use a part of this outrageous fortune to pay off its debts. “It is a part of this luxury of all the members of the Comédie that should be tapped in order to pay their communal debts, and not impose upon the poor, all of Paris, and all of France in order to repay them.”³⁷ This was not merely a bureaucratic struggle. As the lotteries discursively framed it, this was a “great altercation,” because it was a political and moral struggle between the degenerate and luxury-loving actors and actresses and the good and charitable lottery ticket-buying people of France. The lotteries were coded as good, moral, and charitable as were those who bought lottery tickets—that is, when the proceeds for lottery tickets went to relieve the poor rather than to relieve the luxuriant actors.

After making every effort to associate the actors and actresses with luxury and moral degradation, the lottery administrators went on to discuss the consumers. The lotteries claimed that if this proposal were actually enacted for the benefit of the Comédie, it would merely “disgust the public” and lead to lower ticket sales. Those who buy tickets, according to the lottery administrators, do so with a particular motive:

The greatest number of those who play these lotteries, besides the desire and hope of gain, have also the consolation of thinking that if they lose, a part of their loss is going to the well-being of the poor and the church, and they will all be quite offended and disgusted at knowing that this increase on the tickets is in order to relieve the Comédie of what was imposed upon it [the duty] for the necessary aid

³⁷ BN, Joly de Fleury 266, f. 122-130, “Observations.”; “fortunes immenses”; “le luxe de ce que le Théâtre leur a procuré.”; “C’est une partie de ce luxe de tous ces membres de la comédie qu’il faudroit retrancher pour payer leurs deptes communes, et non pas mettre a l’amende les pauvres, tout paris, et toute La France pour les acquitter.”

to the Hôpital Général. This is a thing which cannot be hidden nor reasonably justified.³⁸

The dispute was not simply between the directors of the lotteries and the Comédie but between the Comédie and the public—a public which the lotteries claimed bought tickets primarily in the charitable interest of the poor and the Church. And the lotteries made it clear that the public would not stand for the proposed increase. They warned that “the proposed increase on the tickets of the *trois petites loteries*, very much unrelated to the debts of the comedians, will only create disturbances in the public and be very prejudicial to those who are interested in profiting from them [the foundations funded by the lotteries].” The lottery directors had thus enlisted the ticket consuming public to their side in what they called “a subject of great altercation and dispute between the directors [*regisseurs*] of the *trois loteries* and the actors.”³⁹

In these two very different views of a potential price increase and how that increase would be used there are two competing ideas. First, there are two very different ideas of what the lotteries represent and consequently how they should properly be used. Second, the Comédie and the *trois petites loteries* seem to have very different ideas of what role the public plays and how much power it has. The lottery directors were used to dealing with this fickle consuming public and knew its potential power. Furthermore, the lotteries warned that the consuming public and its reaction was something to be feared.

³⁸ Ibid., “Observations,” [third observation]. “d’augmenter les billets des trois lotteries d’un cinquieme ne peut que dégouter le public”; “le plus grand nombre de ceux qui mettent a ces lotteries, outre l’envie et l’espoir du gain, ont aussi la consolation de penser que s’ils perdent, une partie de leur perte va a bien des pauvres et de l’église, et ils seront tous bien offenser et dégoutes de scavoir que cette augmentation sur leurs billets, est pour acquitter la comedie de ce qui luy est imposé pour le secours necessaire a l’hopital general. C’est une chose qui ne peut etre cachée, ni décevement colorée.”

³⁹ Ibid., “Observations,” [fourth observation]. “L’augmentation proposée sur les billets des trois petites lotteries, tres innoçents des deptes des comédiens ne peut que mettre du trouble dans le public, et etre tres préjudiciable a ceux qui sont interessés a en profiter.”; “C’est une sujet de grande altercation et de disputes entre les regisseurs des trois lotteries et les comediens.”

Meanwhile, the Comédie represented the ticket consuming public as blinded into docility by its own greed.

In an undated memorandum titled “Three Things to Consider,” the lotteries addressed these issues directly. The “three things” include “the object in itself [the lotteries], those who have an interest in it, [and] the possibility of its execution.” The lottery administrators began their memorandum by asking two rhetorical questions: “What in general is a lottery?” and “what are the current lotteries?” To the first question, they responded that “a lottery is a commitment [*engagement*] between those who receive the money of the lottery and those who bear their money to it [the lottery].” In this way a lottery was a contractual agreement among the players. The players join their money together with the understanding that some will lose a small amount and others will win a great amount. And “following from this commitment [*engagement*], one should return the total [of all the money wagered] because in this original institution [*institution primitive*]...the expenses of the lottery should not be taken into account.”⁴⁰ So speaking of lotteries in a more general and even pure form, the lotteries would be a zero sum game—the winnings and losses of the players would always equal zero. As a pure game, the lottery was a commitment and promise among the players in which each player had an equal amount of equity in the game and variations of winnings were simply the luck of the draw, but ultimately no one had an inherent edge or profit.

This definition of a pure lottery does not, of course, describe the *trois petites loteries*, which the author went on to define as follows:

⁴⁰ BN, Joly de Fleury 266, f. 136-141, “Trois chose à examiner.”; “L’objet en luy même. Ceux que cela interesse. La possibilité de l’exécution.”; “Ce que c’est en générale qu’une Lotterie.”; “Ce que sont les Lotteries actuelles.”; “Une lotterie est un engagement entre ce luy qui reçoit le argent de la lotterie, et ceux qui y portent leur argent.”; “suivant cet engagement, on doit restituer le total, car dans l’institution primitive...les frais de la lotterie ne doivent entre en ligne de Compte.”

In regard to the 3 lotteries in question, we have announced to the public with public notices that we will follow exactly the commitment of lotteries with the only exception of the fifteen percent that is collected (expenses included) for the poor; one understands by the name poor to be the foundlings, the poor religious communities, and the building of Saint-Sulpice.

The three lotteries were not pure in form because they stood as an intermediary between the players and as such they took out fifteen percent from the total pool of wagers. The players suffered a loss of equity of fifteen percent, but the lotteries fully and publicly disclosed this stipulation. In order to explain why anyone would be willing to accept this lost equity, the memorandum ultimately explained that there were two types of consumers of lottery tickets. The first type of consumers “bear their money willingly” because “the eagerness for gain causes them to support the fifteen percent loss without repugnance,” and because they saw the lottery as a simple “amusement.” However, there was another type of consumer who did not think the lotteries were in themselves legitimate, but were able to tolerate them because the money was “designated for the assistance of the poor.” These consumers played the lotteries with the intention of helping the poor.⁴¹ For this consumer, the author argued, an increase in ticket price for the benefit of the Comédie would require full disclosure by public notification. Implicitly, there was a significant part of the lottery ticket consuming public that was very much concerned with what their money was being used for, and those consumers might withhold their money.

⁴¹ Ibid., “Trois chose à examiner.” “A l’égard des 3 Lotteries dont il s’agit on a annoncé au public par les affiches qu’on suivroit exactement l’engagement des Lotteries, à la seule exception des quinze pour cent qu’on préleverois (les frais compris) pour les Pauvres; on comprend sous le nom de Pauvre, les Enfants trouvés, les Pauvres Communautés Religieuses, et le Bastiment de Saint Sulpice”; “portent leurs argent volontairement”; “l’avidité du gain leur fait supporter sans répugnance ces quinze pour cent de perte”; “destinées à l’assistance des Pauvres.”

In their collective defense, the lottery administrators vehemently defended their ground and used every bit of rhetoric they could to prevent the actors and actresses of the Comédie from encroaching upon their turf. In defending their position they also clearly outlined their own vision of what the lotteries were, what they should be, and perhaps most importantly, what consumers thought the lotteries were. The lotteries used the contemporary discourse of luxury to portray the actors and actresses of the Comédie as frivolous, selfish, and even immoral. They contrasted the worthiness of the poor with the unworthiness of the Comédie. In using this discursive strategy of portraying the actors and actresses as unworthy and frivolous, the lottery administrators upheld the lotteries and their consumers as being worthy and charitable. They do of course mention that there are some players who hope for gain, but that degree of greed was mitigated by the ultimate charitable end. In this way the lotteries and their consumers ultimately worked together rather than in opposition to each other. As the lotteries framed it, it was the Comédie and by extension the government, if it approved the proposal, that would undermine this traditional, charitable relationship by increasing the ticket price.

Unfortunately we do not know exactly how the government made its final decision, but we do have a draft of a royal order dated September 1, 1748 in which the king would have ordered an increase in the price of the lottery tickets for the *trois petites loteries*. The ticket price would increase by four sous to 24 sous. If the king were to sign this proposal, the increase would have taken effect on December 1, 1748 or January 1, 1749. From the new funds raised by this price increase, 9% would go toward relieving the three privileged theaters in Paris of their duty for the benefit of the Hôtel Dieu de Paris and the Hôpital Général. Of the new profits, 40% of it was to go toward the Hôtel

Dieu de Paris and the other 60% was earmarked for the Hôpital Général. But if the new funds from the lotteries fell short of 105,000 livres per year, then the theaters would have to pick up the shortfall. The king thus set a minimum amount to be raised by the new ticket price. This amount was broken down by theater, so that the Opéra was responsible for 50,000 livres, the Comédie Française for 35,000 livres, and the Comédie Italienne for 20,000 livres. If the 4 sous increase did not provide at least 105,000 livres of support each year, then the theaters would be required to make up the shortfall proportionally.⁴²

Although this order was drawn up, the king never acted upon it, and no price increase occurred at the time.⁴³ Unfortunately, there are few clues in the archives as to what happened next. There is, however, one small tantalizing slip of paper that gives the most concrete and forceful argument yet. The short note is unsigned and undated and includes just two short paragraphs. It begins by stating that, “The public has poorly received” the very idea of “the increase of 4 sous per lottery ticket in favor of the actors. It appears that it would have been happy if the profit from the *trois loteries* such as it had been proposed had been granted to the foundlings.” The author then went on to state that “one can presume that this increase in the tickets will not produce the effect” for which one had hoped. And then the note’s author reminded the reader that there had been a similar proposal to increase ticket prices in 1742—also for the benefit of the Comédie. The note sternly reminded the reader that “the simple rumor of the increase” in 1742 had decreased the sales of the Loterie de Saint-Sulpice by 46,000 tickets in just one month—

⁴² BN, Joly de Fleury 266, f. 109-111. “Copie d’une Décision du Roy concernant les Spectacles.”

⁴³ Changes in even the most minute details of the lotteries were generally printed and formally posted around the city of Paris and the suburbs. However, there is no such extant printed order of a 1740s price increase. We also have a complete record of lottery sales from 1745 to 1765. These records note the 1754 price increase, since it was assumed that it had an impact on sales. There is no such indication of any increase in the records from the 1740s.

implying that the Loterie des Enfants Trouvés and the other two lotteries would suffer the same fate in 1747.⁴⁴ This note reaffirms and feeds into the fear that consumers would react negatively to any increase that would fundamentally alter the lotteries' traditional, charitable mission. It also fits into the lottery administrators' discursively constructed image of the consuming public—that is, a public that spent in a very conscious and rational way: a public that was very much aware of its own power and was willing to use it.

The lottery administrators' arguments won the day. The administrators of the *trois petites loteries* did everything they could to place the lotteries, their consumers, and the deserving poor discursively within the traditional economic and social norms. The lotteries, as they portrayed them, were charitable and should remain so. Explicitly, the lottery administrators placed the Comédie outside of this tradition—and indeed, even as threatening to it. The administrators portrayed the actors and actresses as seeking to use the lotteries for their own personal gain. The actors sought to exploit the success of the lotteries in order to avoid their own traditional support of the poor rather than cut back on their own excessive, selfish, and luxurious lifestyle. The lottery administrators discursively defined lotteries as clearly charitable. The lotteries seemed to win this particular battle, but their continuing success would bring more attention to them and lotteries as a fiscal instrument more generally. This would not be the last battle.

⁴⁴ BN, Joly de Fleury 266, f. 162.

Growth and Disruption: Building Sainte-Geneviève

The *trois petites loteries* were able to fight off encroachment from the Comédie Française during the 1740s, and the lotteries would continue to be immensely popular and, consequently, successful. Revenues for the *trois loteries* continued to grow over the late 1740s and early 1750s. During the year of the Great Altercation in 1747, the Loterie de Saint-Sulpice took in 1,936,000 livres from ticket sales, and by 1753, that number had risen to 3,634,000 livres—nearly doubling in the six years since the attempted price increase by the theaters. That success, however, would be a double-edged sword. In the short term, the success increased funds available to the various charitable groups, but in the long term, that success heightened the lotteries' profile in almost every way and threatened the lotteries' control and domination of the lottery system as others followed the theaters' example with attempts at encroachment for their own benefit. By 1754, there was yet another attempt. This time the new petitioners learned the lessons of the Great Altercation and adopted a new approach.

In 1754, the abbot of Sainte-Geneviève began petitioning the government for support in rebuilding the dilapidated church, which held symbolic significance in honoring the patron saint of the city of Paris. Ultimately officials decided to use the three lotteries to fund the massive building project of what would become the new Sainte-Geneviève church (now the Panthéon). The December 9, 1754 order very much followed the pattern of the Comédie's request for lottery funds by demonstrating need of the petitioner, utility of the project, and ease of collection. The government cited the utter dilapidation of the Sainte-Geneviève church coupled with the parish's modest financial resources, especially for a project of such scale. The order then went on to state that the

king wished “to maintain a church precious to the inhabitants of the good city of Paris because of their confidence in the capital’s patron.” And finally, the king wanted to offer “protection to an abbey which has held for so long a distinguished rank in the French Church.”⁴⁵ The Sainte-Geneviève church was worthy of aid via the lotteries due to its unique role in glorifying the patron saint of the city of Paris.

Having demonstrated need and utility, the order declared that the king had no method “easier and less onerous than those which have already been used for the support of other establishments equally favorable”—namely, the lotteries.⁴⁶ This seems to be the crux of the difference between the previous proposed increase in favor of the theaters and the newly proposed increase in favor of Sainte-Geneviève. While both proposals ultimately proposed a break from the status quo, at least in the sense that there would be a change to the current operations of the *trois loteries*, the current proposal did not break fundamentally from the charitable tradition of the lotteries. To be sure, the mission of the Loterie de Saint-Sulpice was to raise funds for the reconstruction of a popular and famed church—the very goals of the proposed increase in support of Sainte-Geneviève. While the theaters seemed less worthy of aid than Saint-Sulpice, the foundlings, and the poor religious communities, the rebuilding of Sainte-Geneviève seemed “equally favorable.” The lottery administrators would be hard pressed to argue against a proposal the aims of which were so similar to the lotteries’ original mission. The price increase would thus be in line with the traditional mission of the lotteries while simultaneously being a major lottery expansion.

⁴⁵ AN, F12 795, “Arrest du Conseil d’État du Roi, qui ordonne qu’à compter du premier Mars 1755, les Billets des trois Loteries qui se tirent chaque mois dans la ville de Paris, seront augmentés d’un cinquième, & demeureront fixés à vingt-quatre sols. Du 9 Décembre 1754.”

⁴⁶ Ibid.

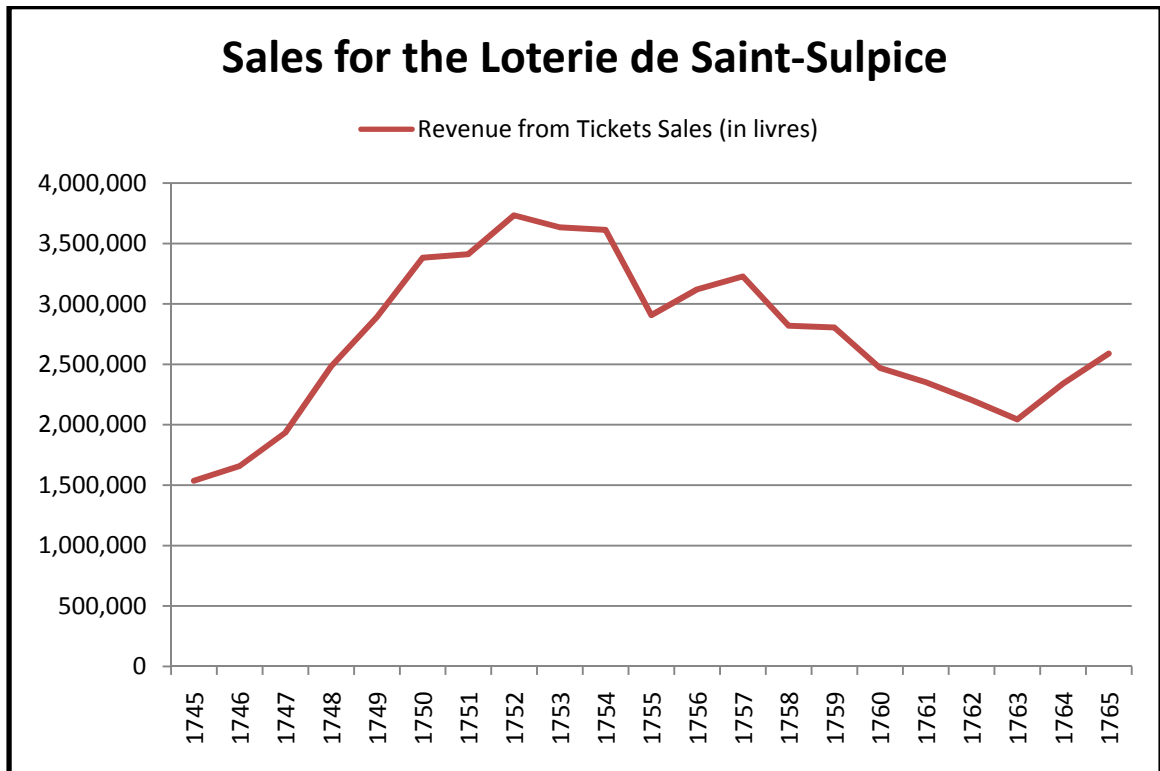
The 1754 change marked an expansion of the ticket price and an expanding mission, but it also marked a subtle change in the relationship between consumers and the lotteries in changing the payout structure. The December 9, 1754 order increased the price of the tickets of the three lotteries from 20 sous to 24 sous. The increase took effect on March 1 of the following year with payments to be made to the abbey's treasurer one month after the drawings of the individual lotteries. Of the 4 sous increase, half went toward the Sainte-Geneviève building project "without deduction of any expenses," so for every ticket sold Sainte-Geneviève received 2 sous.⁴⁷ The other 2 sous would go toward an increased prize pool. This was actually quite an extraordinary arrangement, considering that the Hôpital des Enfants Trouvés received only 15% of the 20 sous ticket, which included the operating expenses of the lottery. Before 1754, the players had an 85% equity in the 20 sous ticket, since 85% of their ticket purchase would be paid out in winning tickets. Under the new arrangement, however, only 79% of ticket sales were paid out to consumers. This marked an increasing intrusion into a game that during the Great Altercation the lottery administrators had portrayed, in its purest form, as a zero sum game. The players' equity was decreasing and the lotteries' fiscal reach into the players' prize pool was increasing. As the lotteries expanded, they were becoming less about the players and charity, as the administrators had portrayed the lotteries during the Great Altercation, and more about fiscal exploitation and expediency. Even as the charitable goal was maintained the function of the lotteries was being redefined.

There was yet another implication of the 1754 price increase: a significant and devastating drop in the profits of the three original foundations that ran the lotteries. In the mid-1760s, a study was commissioned by former Controller General Henri-Jean-

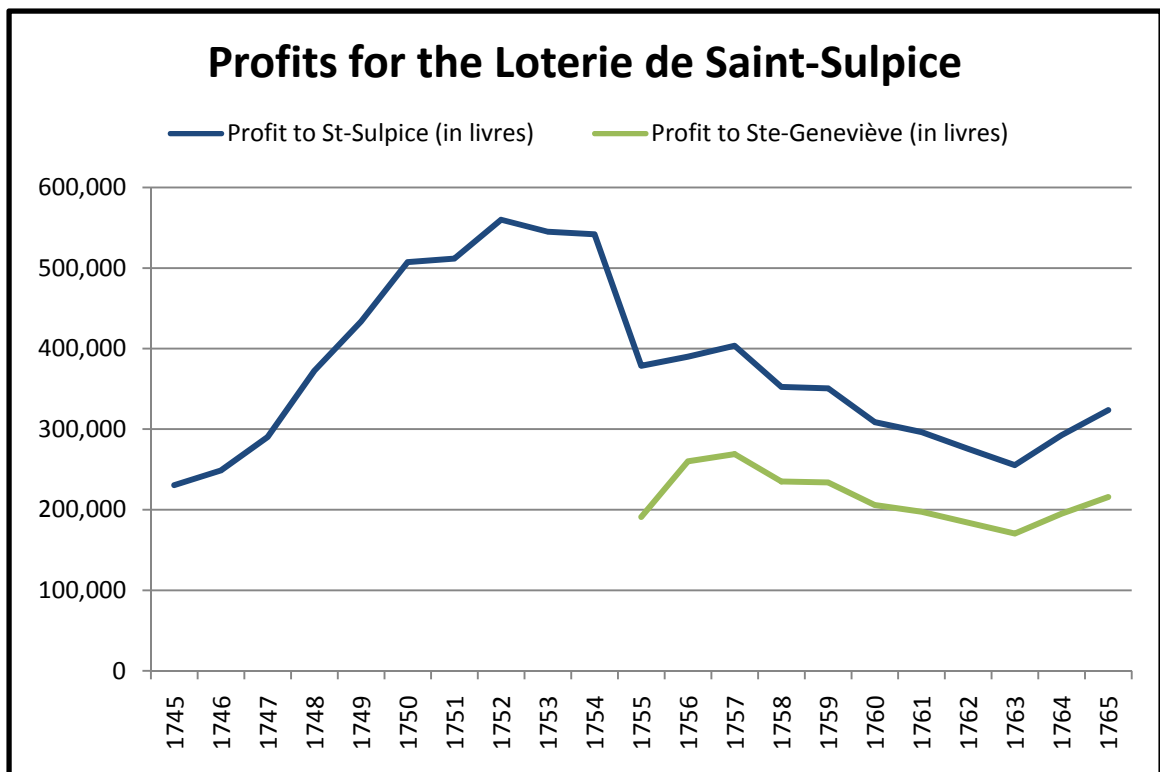
⁴⁷ Ibid.

Baptist-Léonard Bertin to examine the effect various events had on the lotteries, including war, economic downturns, the addition of new lotteries, and changes in ticket prices. As I will discuss later, Bertin was relatively hostile to the expansion of the lotteries beyond the *trois loteries*' original charitable mission, and his study was meant in large part to limit further intrusion on the lotteries. The Bertin study is a critical document in providing us with a thorough record of the lotteries' intake for the years 1745 to 1765. I have used this study along with other sources when necessary to compile tables of lottery sales and profits for the Loterie de Saint-Sulpice, the Loterie des Enfants Trouvés, and the Loterie des Communautés Religieuses for the years 1745 to 1765 (see the appendices). This information appears below in Graphs 1-6.

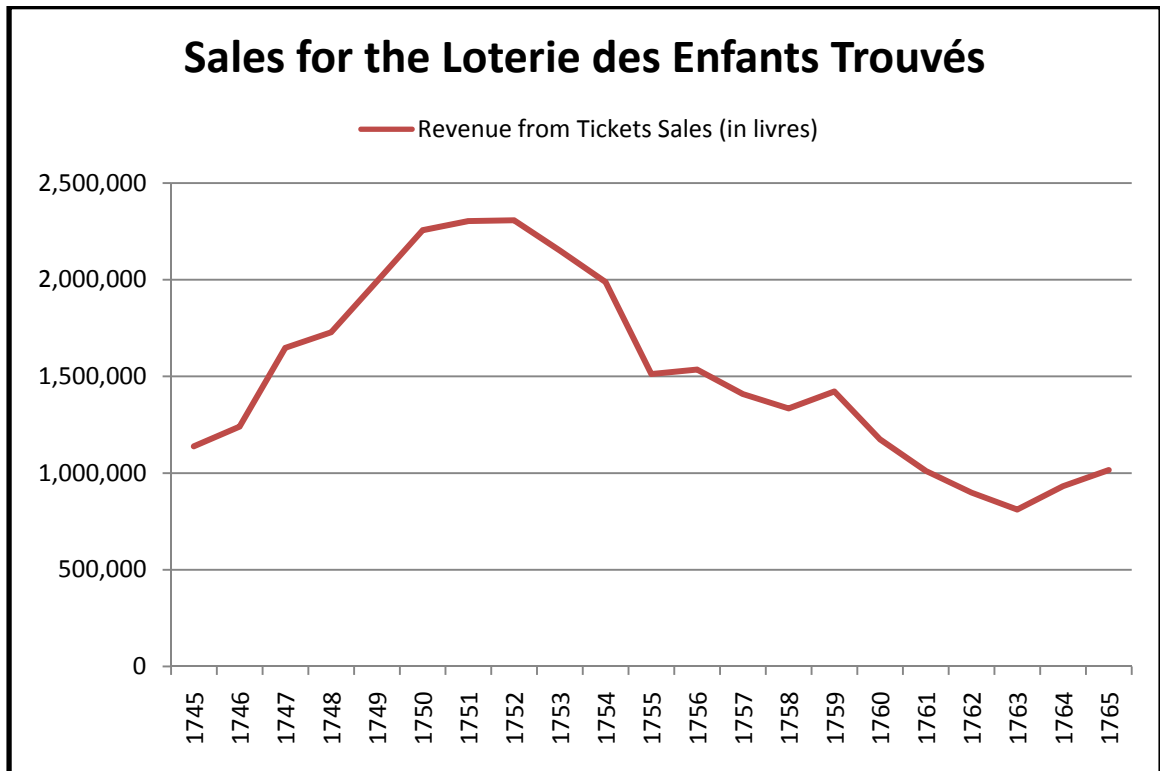
Graph 1: Sales for the Loterie de Saint-Sulpice



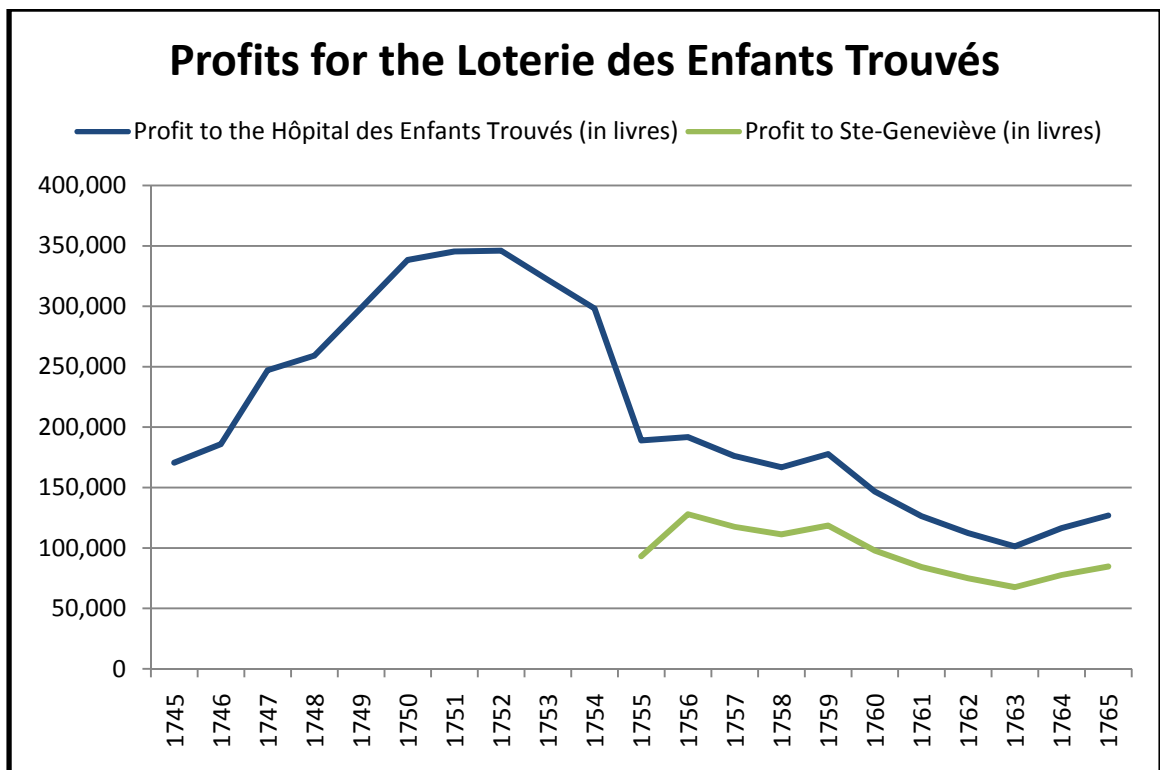
Graph 2: Profits for the Loterie de Saint-Sulpice



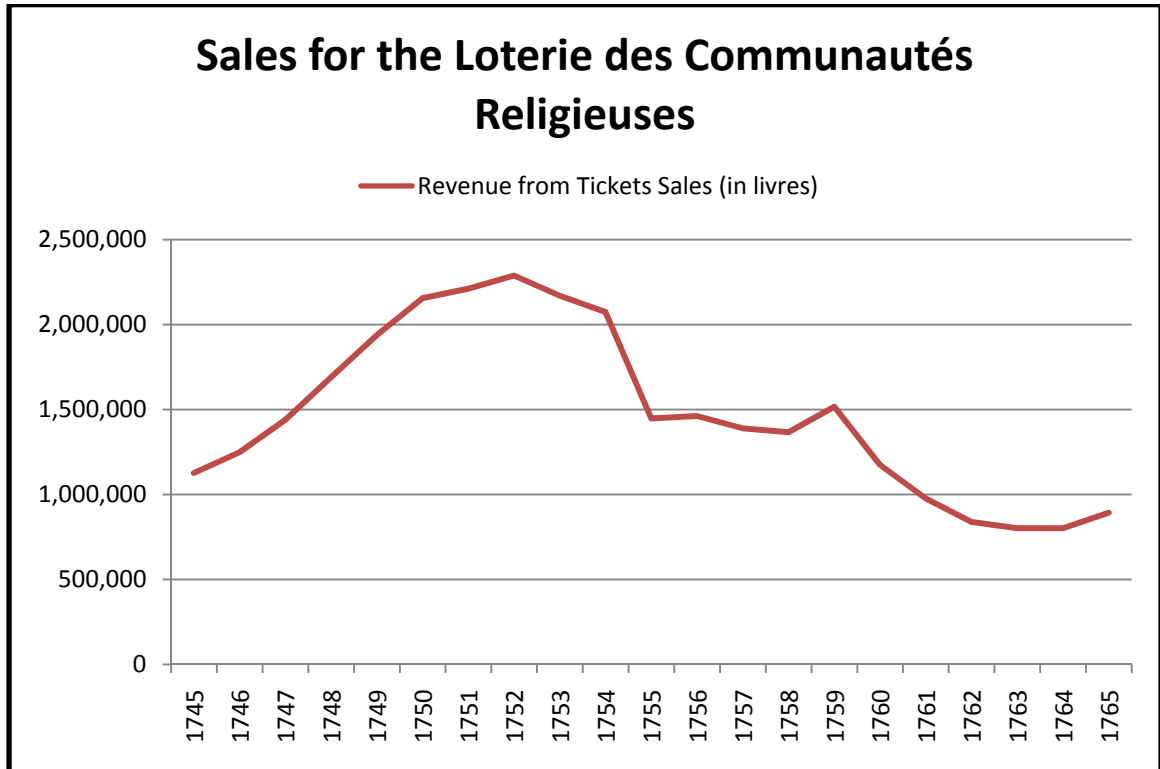
Graph 3: Sales for the Loterie des Enfants Trouvés



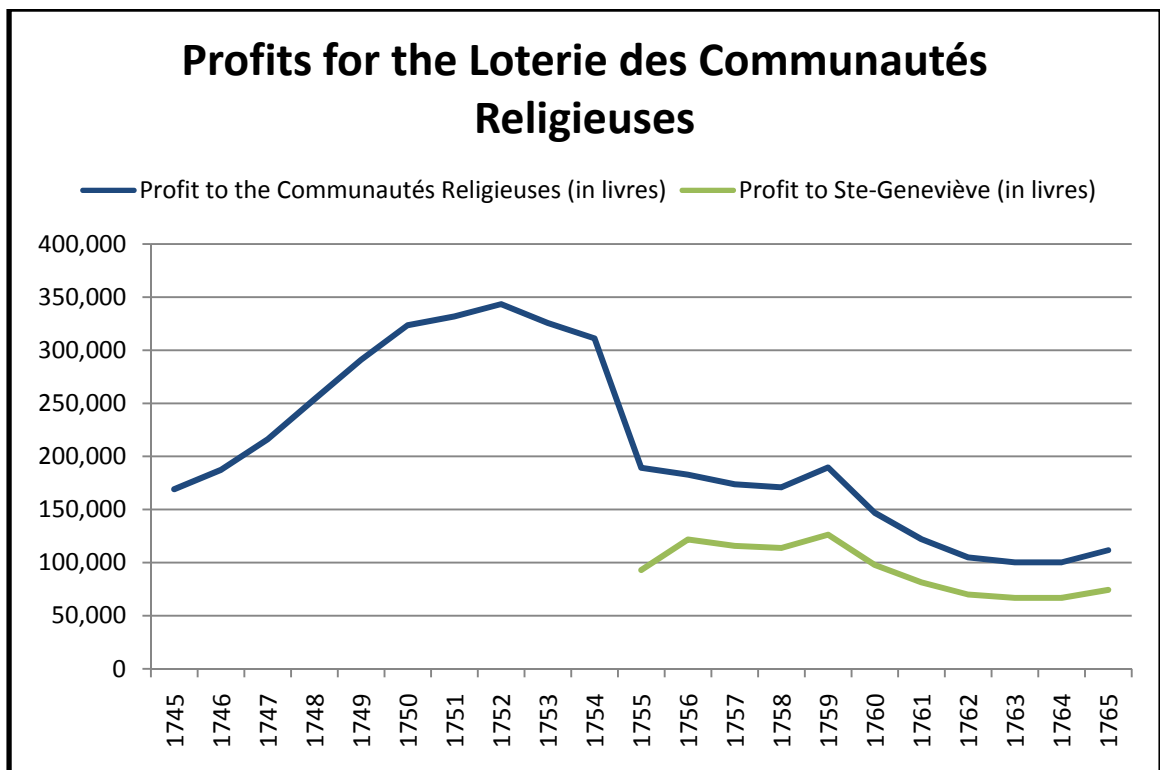
Graph 4: Profits for the Loterie des Enfants Trouvés



Graph 5: Sales for the Loterie des Communautés Religieuses



Graph 6: Profits for the Loterie des Communautés Religieuses



These graphs show the numerous ebbs and flows of lottery sales over this two decade period. As already discussed, ticket sales steadily increased through the 1740s and then hit a plateau between 1752 and 1754. Indeed, 1755 was the first year that showed any kind of significant drop in ticket sales from the previous year, with sales dropping from 3,612,000 tickets sold in 1754 to 2,525,000 tickets sold in 1755. The March 1, 1755 price increase had a dramatic and clear impact on ticket sales. Indeed, sales dropped off immediately with only 195,000 tickets sold for the March 1755 drawing of the Loterie de Saint-Sulpice compared to 310,000 tickets sold for the March 1754 drawing. That number is even more dramatic when one considers that the sales for the February 1755 drawing were 280,000 tickets—the most tickets ever sold for a February drawing. Furthermore, ticket sales for the March drawing had historically been about 20% more than the February drawing.⁴⁸ So based upon the historical monthly trends, the administrators of the Loterie de Saint-Sulpice could have reasonably expected March ticket sales in 1755 of nearly 335,000. They would have expected that amount, that is, had it not been for the March 1 increase. That the price increase had an immediate and dramatic impact on consumers was undeniable.

As dramatic as this impact may seem, it only begins to tell the story of the effect on the three foundations. One part of Bertin's study compared specifically the profits for the *trois petites loteries* for the years 1750-1753 and then the years 1755-1758. The first four-year period was a time of peace and relative economic stability; while the second four-year period was a time of warfare as France was pulled ever deeper into the Seven Years War, but it was also the first four full years after the 4 sous price increase. The

⁴⁸ AN, F12 795, "Releve des Benefices de la Loterie de St. Sulpice."

study never made a claim of isolating the ticket price increase alone.⁴⁹ Table 2.1 below shows the eight years of comparison for the Loterie de Saint-Sulpice as it appears in the study under the document title, “Loterie de Saint-Sulpice, Comparaison du Benefice de la loterie de Saint-Sulpice pendant 4 années de paix avant l’augmentation des 4 sous et pendant 4 années de guerre après l’augmentation des 4 sous” (“Loterie de Saint-Sulpice, comparison of the profit of the Loterie de Saint-Sulpice during 4 years of peace before the increase of 4 sous and during 4 years of war after the increase of 4 sous”).

⁴⁹ This study can be found in AN, G9 114 “4 Autres Comparaisons.” The numbers given in the actual study are normally the net amount that went toward the particular institution before the actual lottery expenses were deducted. I have simply calculated what the total ticket sales and revenues were from these numbers. For example, in 1750 the survey lists the gross profit of the Loterie de Saint-Sulpice as 507,300 livres which would make for total ticket sales of 3,382,000 livre since the lottery took a gross profit of 15% of all sales. The second four-year period is a bit more complicated since the study lists the gross profit of Saint-Sulpice and Sainte-Geneviève separately and since Saint-Sulpice took a 15% gross profit off of the 20 sous and Sainte-Geneviève took a gross profit of 50% off of the 4 sous. For example, for 1755 it lists former’s gross profit as 286,500 livres and latter’s gross profit as 191,000 livres. So the total lottery revenue for 1755 was 2,292,000 livres, which amounted to 1,910,000 livres from the original 20 sous price that benefited Saint-Sulpice at a 15% gross profit rate and then 382,000 livres total revenue for the 4 sous increase, half of which went directly to Sainte-Geneviève.

Table 2.1: Comparison of the Profits of the Loterie de Saint-Sulpice before and after the 4 sous Price Increase⁵⁰

Year	Profit (in livres)	Year	Profit to Saint-Sulpice (in livres)	Profit to Sainte-Geneviève (in livres)	Total of Saint-Sulpice and Sainte-Geneviève Profit (in livres)
1750	507,300	1755	286,500 ⁵¹	191,000	477,500
1751	511,650	1756	390,000	260,000	650,000
1752	562,950 ⁵²	1757	403,500	269,000	672,500
1753	545,100	1758	352,500	235,800	588,300
Total	2,127,000		1,432,500	955,800	2,388,300
	Difference between the totals for the two four-year periods		694,500		

This document shows that the total profits for the two four-year periods actually increased by 261,300 livres after the 4 sous increase—2,388,300 livres for the second period versus 2,127,000 livres for the first period. But these numbers are misleading as the author of the document noted in his “Observations” written below the comparative table. As he noted, of the 4 sous extra charged starting in 1755, 2 sous went to the lottery prize pool in hopes that this increase in winning lots “would compensate for the harm that the 4 sous added to the price of the ticket would necessarily cause to their distribution.”

In other words, they hoped that the increased prize pool would be incentive enough to

⁵⁰ AN, G9 114, “Loterie de St. Sulpice, Comparaison du Benefice de la loterie de St. Sulpice pendant 4 années de paix avant l’augmentation des 4 sous et pendant 4 années de guerre après l’augmentation des 4 sous.”

⁵¹ The figure given for 1755 is written as 286,500 livres, but this seems to be a simple mistake and the “2” should be a “3”, making it 386,500 livres, which is consistent with other sources. I have left in the inaccurate number of 286,500 livres because the document refers to the inaccurate numbers.

⁵² The figure for 1752 in Table 2.1, 562,950 livres, is slightly different than the figure represented in the graphs and appendices. I have used the different number in Table 2.1 because that is the number in the actual document and in order to keep the totals the same as in the document.

maintain the number of ticket sales and thus that Saint-Sulpice would receive the same amount of profit while also aiding Sainte-Geneviève. But as the “Observations” point out, although the profits from the lottery as a whole increased, “the profit going to Saint-Sulpice decreased by 694,500 livres in 4 years. That is to say, by more than a third of its profit.”⁵³ Because Saint-Sulpice was still to receive a 15% profit from the first 20 sous of the ticket just as before 1755, the total number of tickets sold had to remain the same in order for Saint-Sulpice’s profits to remain stable. The prize pool increase was meant to stimulate ticket sales, but this is obviously not the way it worked out as the number of tickets sold plummeted.

In short, the *trois loteries* were becoming overall more profitable with the 1755 price increase, but the original three foundations received much less support. In terms of the sheer amount of money being made, the lotteries were still expanding, and indeed, the number of projects being funded also expanded. The theaters’ proposal had failed because it seemed to stray too far from the charitable tradition of the *trois loteries*, and the price increase in favor of Sainte-Geneviève succeeded because it was perfectly in line with that charitable tradition. The 1755 increase was placed within the lotteries’ charitable tradition, while simultaneously reducing the significance and importance of the three original foundations within the larger lottery system. Either way one looks at the 1754 increase, it marked a definite expansion of the lottery system.

⁵³ AN, G9 114, “Loterie de St. Sulpice, Comparaison du Benefice de la loterie de St. Sulpice pendant 4 années de paix avant l’augmentation des 4 sous et pendant 4 années de guerre après l’augmentation des 4 sous.”

The Loterie de l'Hôtel de Ville de Paris and the Challenge to the *Trois Loteries*

In many ways, the price increase of 1754 was indeed a serious expansion of the lottery system, yet at the same time it was perfectly in line with the traditional charitable imperative. The expansion put the lottery system in flux, but it was not entirely destabilized. As was almost always the case with the French lottery system in the eighteenth century, the situation would become much more volatile as French finances deteriorated, and it seemed as if every crisis throughout the century was worse than the previous one. The War of Austrian Succession put pressure on the French economy and finances like none before it, and yet the Seven Years War from 1756 to 1763 managed to surpass it and pushed the French fiscal system toward the precipice once again.⁵⁴ Things were so bad that in 1759 the royal silver was sent to the mint to be melted down and turned into exchangeable money.⁵⁵ As with every crisis, the burdens of the war led to changes and innovations that were unlikely under ordinary circumstances. And during the war, the lotteries' charitable mission would once again be challenged by those who pushed the lotteries as instruments of fiscal expediency, but this time the French monarchy would succumb. In 1760, after four years of war and financial difficulty, the crown granted a three-year privilege to the city of Paris to operate the Loterie de l'Hôtel de Ville de Paris, commonly known as the Loterie de la Ville. How the funds of the lottery were to be used was not entirely clear, but it was clearly meant to help alleviate the general budget strains of the city. The new lottery broke the traditional paradigm in several ways. It was neither earmarked specifically for charitable use, nor was it

⁵⁴ James C. Riley, *The Seven Years War and the Old Regime in France: The Economic and Financial Toll* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986).

⁵⁵ Julian Swann, *Politics and the Parlement of Paris under Louis XV, 1754-1774* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 156.

specifically for war-related state debt—though it was created during wartime. It was initially created as temporary with only a three-year privilege, yet three years was a relatively long time since most temporary lotteries only lasted for a drawing or two and a year was considered a very long time. The Loterie de la Ville deepened the crack in the French lottery system and many in the administrative apparatus were well aware of this. Indeed, the new lottery became hotly contested at the very highest administrative levels, including the Controller General.

The administrative contestation surrounding the Loterie de la Ville took place within the larger context of deep political contestation which consumed Bertin's tenure as Controller General of France—a position he held from November of 1759 until his disgrace in December of 1763.⁵⁶ Previously Lieutenant General of Police, Bertin came into office with an agenda of widespread reform of both French economic and fiscal policy, and he immediately faced stiff opposition from the parlements. Both of these reform movements and the discourses surrounding them would intersect at least indirectly with the French lottery system, and they would play an important role in framing later debates. Julian Swann points out that the debates with the parlements over taxes during the Seven Years War would shape the contours of political debate over fiscal policy for the rest of the Old Regime, particularly during the 1787-89 crisis.⁵⁷ This is also true for public debate about the lotteries. In the period of 1756-1763, the lotteries were generally a secondary issue and not at the forefront of public discussion. But as the focus of the lotteries moved from charity to French finance, they took a more central

⁵⁶ Françoise Bayard, Joël Félix, and Phillippe Hamon, *Dictionnaire des surintendants et contrôleurs généraux des finances du XVIe siècle à la Révolution française de 1789* (Paris: Comité pour l'histoire économique et financière de la France, 2000), 159-163.

⁵⁷ Swann, *Politics and the Parlement of Paris under Louis XV*, 157.

place in the debate and were influenced by the earlier discourses. By the 1770s and 1780s, the ideas intrinsic in these economic and fiscal reform movements of the 1750s and 1760s and the opposition to them would play a direct discursive role in the debates about lotteries. So Bertin's economic and fiscal reforms, or attempts at them, are worth discussing here.

Bertin was generally sympathetic toward physiocracy which espoused liberalization of markets, particularly the grain market, and promotion of agriculture as the true source of wealth.⁵⁸ He came to office intent on instituting economic reforms across France, particularly in agriculture and the grain trade, and he was generally sympathetic toward physiocratic ideas. One historian has even referred to Bertin as the first physiocratic minister.⁵⁹ Bertin was a protégé of Madame de Pompadour, who was herself an advocate of agricultural reform and liberalizing the grain trade by removing price controls and allowing grain exports. She was a noted patron of physiocracy, even having as her personal physician none other than François Quesnay, whom many consider the father of physiocracy.⁶⁰ Bertin surrounded himself with liberals and reformers including, Pierre-Samuel Dupont de Nemours, André Morellet, and Anne-Robert-Jacques Turgot, yet he was not totally committed ideologically to physiocracy.⁶¹ In general, physiocrats believed that government mandated price controls kept grain

⁵⁸ For a more extensive discussion of physiocracy, particularly in this period, see Elizabeth Fox-Genovese, *The Origins of Physiocracy: Economic Revolution and Social Order in Eighteenth-Century France* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1976); Steven L. Kaplan, *Bread, Politics and Political Economy in the Reign of Louis XV* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1976), 111-144; Michael Kwass, *Privilege and the Politics of Taxation in Eighteenth-Century France* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 222-252; Judith A. Miller, "Economic Ideologies, 1750-1800: The Creation of the Modern Political Economy?" *French Historical Studies* 23 (2000): 497-511; and John Shovlin, *The Political Economy of Virtue: Luxury, Patriotism, and the Origins of the French Revolution* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2006), 83-92.

⁵⁹ Guy Caire, "Bertin, ministre physiocrate," *Revue d'histoire économique et sociale* 38 (1960): 257-284.

⁶⁰ Kaplan, *Bread, Politics, and Political Economy*, 113; Shovlin, *Political Economy of Virtue*, 80-81.

⁶¹ Kaplan, *Bread, Politics, and Political Economy*, 130-131.

prices artificially low. Low prices in turn discouraged agricultural production, which then led to potentially dangerously low supplies. By lifting price controls and allowing the free market to take hold, physiocrats assumed that grain production would increase, carrying with it the whole economy. Bertin accepted these ideas in principle, but as the former top police official charged with maintaining social order in Paris, he was also a cautious pragmatist. Bertin finally pushed the liberal reforms in early 1763 several years after becoming Controller General. Always cautious, he allowed for the free trade of grain throughout France, but he maintained the old order within Paris, fearing the effects of potential social unrest in the city. He also forbade grain exports. It was a compromised position which physiocrats felt did not go far enough.⁶²

The emerging ideas of physiocracy would later become very important to the discourses surrounding lotteries as I discuss more in depth in later chapters. It is enough here to say that because physiocrats saw agriculture as the real source of all wealth, commerce and trade were simply tools to expand agriculture and thus expand real French wealth. Many notable physiocrats, including most prominently Turgot but also Dupont, Guillaume-François Le Trosne, and Victor Riqueti, marquis de Mirabeau, would all oppose lotteries based upon their economic ideology. They saw lotteries as nothing more than simply pushing money around and therefore economically superfluous. But again, these ideologies as related to lotteries were not yet hardened. In fact, as I will discuss in the next chapter, Madame de Pompadour, who loosely espoused physiocracy, was a tireless advocate of both lotteries and agronomy. These views of agronomy and physiocracy are important because both Bertin and later Clément-Charles-François de L'Averdy were reformers and advocates of agriculture, yet their views of lotteries were

⁶² Ibid., 137-139.

muddled and not necessarily constrained by a stringent ideology.⁶³ Nonetheless agronomy and physiocracy served as a backdrop for the coming dispute of the lotteries and at the very least informed the way both men saw the lotteries, even if they were not stringent ideologues.

Another important backdrop for the lotteries was the tax disputes that overwhelmed Bertin's tenure as Controller General and ultimately led to his disgrace at the end of 1763. These tax disputes would also become more ossified and shape discussions of lotteries in later decades. With the Seven Years War still raging, Bertin pushed an edict in February 1760 that raised two kinds of taxes. He added a *vingtième* to the first two wartime *vingtièmes* already in place and doubled the capitation for the privileged. The 1760 edict set off a flurry of disputes between the parlements around France and the crown that continued until Bertin's disgrace in 1763.⁶⁴ The monarchy eventually forced the parlements to register the 1760 edict with a *lit de justice*, setting a pattern of resentment and forced registration for many later tax decrees. These forced registrations pushed the parlements into the political sphere, when they argued their case directly to the public. One of the primary arguments they deployed was that these decrees were not law at all. A law, they argued, was presented to the nation and consented to by it, and they represented the nation. The magistrates increasingly argued that any law not voluntarily consented to by them as representatives of the nation was by nature arbitrary and despotic. Rule of law, as the magistrates argued, was being crushed

⁶³ Bayard, *Dictionnaire des surintendants et contrôleurs généraux des finances*, 163-168; for a more thorough treatment of L'Averdy, see Joël Félix, *Finances et politique au siècle des Lumières: Le ministère L'Averdy, 1763-1768* (Paris: Comité pour l'histoire économique et financière de la France, 1999).

⁶⁴ For a more extensive discussion of these tax disputes, see David Hudson, "The Parliamentary Crisis of 1763 in France and Its Consequences," *Canadian Journal of History* 7 (1972): 97-117; Kwass, *Privilege and the Politics of Taxation*, 161-193; Riley, *Seven Years War*, 192-222; Shovlin, *Political Economy of Virtue*, 92-102; Swann, *Politics and the Parlement of Paris*, 156-192.

by the French monarchy under the weight of all these new taxes, which were in turn crushing the people of France who were despotically coerced into paying them. The parlements thus placed themselves as the benevolent defenders of the French public and French constitutionalism in opposition to the rapacious French monarchy.⁶⁵

It is within this context that the Loterie de la Ville was created. With the paucity of archival records, it is difficult to pinpoint the monarchy's exact motives in establishing this new lottery. It is tempting, however, to see it as an effort simply to bypass the parlement altogether. For one thing, it was created by royal order emanating from the king's council and not subject to parliamentary registration, as were tax edicts. The lottery was a new way to raise funds by the monarchy—albeit indirectly since the lottery revenues went to the Paris municipality and not the crown. At the same time, it simply bypassed the messy issue of the taxation disputes, since the lottery was neither a tax as traditionally defined nor was it, on its face, a coercive measure. In fact, as we saw with the Great Altercation, the voluntary nature of lotteries was relatively widely accepted. The Loterie de la Ville skirted the parlements as institutions, but it also skirted the parlementaires' discourse of despotism. It is impossible to say with any degree of certainty that this was the monarchy's motive, and to be sure, the total funds raised by the lottery was just a drop in the bucket of the larger fiscal crisis facing the crown. Nonetheless, the Loterie de la Ville did throw yet another twist into the debate about the lottery system in France, particularly at the highest administrative levels. No less than Bertin expressed great unease with it and the larger direction in which lotteries were moving.

⁶⁵ Kwass, *Privilege and the Politics of Taxation*, 161-193.

Bertin came to power as Controller General in 1759 with the intention of reforming both the French economic and fiscal system, and the French lottery system. In a 1766 memoir to his successor, L'Averdy, he claimed that in 1759 he had hoped to restore the *trois petites loteries* to their previous profit levels and return the lottery system to its more traditional foundation. However, no sooner had he come into office than the city of Paris asked for a lottery for itself in order to fund public works projects around the city. Constrained by the fiscal demands of the war and political disputes with the parlement, Bertin allowed the new lottery but always saw it as a temporary measure of fiscal expediency.⁶⁶ Rather than reforming the lottery system by contracting the lottery market and concentrating it on the narrower charitable mission of earlier years, Bertin found himself dealing with an expanding lottery system which only put the *trois loteries* in further distress as they had to compete for consumers in a more competitive lottery market.

The Loterie de l'Hôtel de Ville de Paris was brought into existence with a three-year privilege by an order from the king's council on July 30, 1760. The royal order is vague as to how exactly the funds were to be used, but it refers to "different projects of utility and improvements" and to "urgent repairs and reconstructions that would be dangerous to put off."⁶⁷ The lottery was explicitly to benefit projects in Paris, whatever those may have been, and was put under the charge of the office of the Prevôt des Marchands et Échevins—the head of both the Paris municipality and city magistrates

⁶⁶ AN, G9 114, the document this information is from is simply titled "Memoire" and has "Loterie d'hôtel de ville de Paris" written in the upper left corner. It is dated April 5, 1770 and gives a fairly lengthy history of the Loterie de la Ville.

⁶⁷ BN, Fonds français 22115, "Arrest du Conseil d'État du Roi. Portant établissement, pendant trois années, d'une Loterie de deux millions quatre cens mille livres en faveur de l'Hôtel de ville de Paris...Du 30 Juillet 1760."; "les différens projets d'utilité & d'embellissemens"; "des réparations & reconstructions urgentes qu'il seroit dangereux de différer."

who was responsible for operating the lottery as well as having jurisdiction over any legal disputes that might arise.⁶⁸ The lottery was to be drawn every other month and consist of a total of 100,000 tickets sold at 24 livres each for a total gross revenue of 2,400,000 livres per drawing.⁶⁹ At 24 livres per ticket or twelve times the cost of a ticket for the *trois loteries*, the price was clearly out of the range of all but the most wealthy, so the lottery design allowed for tickets to be split into 40 coupons of 12 sous each. This meant that up to forty individuals could buy a share of one ticket for only 12 sous—exactly half the price of a ticket for one of the *trois petites loteries*.⁷⁰ Each ticket would be numbered 1 through 100,000. The drawings were to be held in “the Great Hall of the Hôtel de Ville of Paris, in the customary manner.” The 2,400,000 livres prize pool would be divided into 10,000 winning lots ranging from the grand prize (*gros lot*) of 150,000 livres down to 100 livres. (See Table 2.2 for the breakdown of the winning lots.) The Receveur de la Ville was to handle the funds of the lottery and pay the winning lots. All of the lottery’s profits would be held in a “Caisse particulière” for special projects and the profits were in no way to mix with the city’s general coffers. The lottery would retain ten percent of each winning lot, so that it would ultimately make a profit of 240,000 livres per drawing.⁷¹

⁶⁸ Garrioch, *Making of Revolutionary Paris*, 95.

⁶⁹ BN, Fonds français 22115, “Arrest du Conseil d’État du Roi... Du 30 Juillet 1760.”

⁷⁰ AN, G9 114, “Memoire” April 5, 1770.

⁷¹ BN, Fonds français 22115, “Arrest du Conseil d’État du Roi... Du 30 Juillet 1760.”

Table 2.2: Payout Structure of the Loterie de la Ville under the July 30, 1760 Arret⁷²

Number of Winning Lots	Amount Paid to Each Lot (in livres)	Total (in livres)
1		150,000
1		100,000
1		50,000
2	30,000	60,000
4	15,000	60,000
20	10,000	200,000
50	3,000	150,000
109	2,000	218,000
211	1,000	211,000
602	500	301,000
8,998	100	899,800
1		200
Total: 10,000 Winning Lots		2,400,000

It is worth taking pause here to consider the scale of this lottery. According to the initial plan, 2,400,000 livres worth of tickets would be sold every two months. From those revenues the administration would keep a profit of 10 percent, or 240,000 livres for the bimonthly drawing. By these initial assumptions, the lottery would make a profit of 1,440,000 livres a year. In the absolute plainest terms possible, that was a huge amount of money in 1760, particularly for a municipality. The royal order of July 1760 implied that the money raised by this new lottery was for miscellaneous “different projects of utility and improvements,” yet at nearly a million and a half livres a year it is difficult to fathom that this money was earmarked for mere incidentals. As a point of comparison, all three of the *trois petites loteries* combined only made a net profit in 1759 of 1,196,750 livres—less than the projected profit for the new lottery. The sheer magnitude of this lottery lends credence to the idea that the lottery was meant to help alleviate the state’s fiscal crisis.

⁷² Ibid.

The first drawing of the Loterie de la Ville was held on December 16, 1760, and within a week, the king had issued a second order revising the original one of July 30, 1760. Most importantly, the government changed the lottery's payout structure. Under the original plan, the lottery paid out a total prize pool of 2,400,000 livres and those winning lots were fixed. However, it soon became clear that this could cause serious problems if the lottery did not manage to sell all of the tickets. The lottery could potentially be in the position of having sold 2,000,000 livres worth of tickets and yet having to pay out 2,400,000 livres worth of winning lots. Apparently, and inexplicably, officials only realized this sometime around the first drawing of the lottery. The new order declared that the winning lots would not be fixed, but rather be determined by the number of tickets sold. The grand prize would be a tenth of the total receipts and the smallest prize would be no smaller than 200 livres. The rest of the lots would be fixed somewhere in between. The government required lottery administrators to announce publicly by *affiche*, a public posting put up around the city, before the drawing what the total receipts were and how the lots would be divided. (See Image 2.6 for a 1761 *affiche* of the lottery.) Also, starting in January of 1761 the lottery would now be drawn every month, rather than every other month. And the Prevôt des Marchands et Échevins, charged with operating the lottery, was now permitted to sell tickets for the lottery throughout France if he wished.⁷³

There are a few things worth pointing out about this follow-up order. First, it is a bit curious that in the beginning of the December order, it referred to the fixed amount of tickets and that it exposed the city to potentially being “burdened by a number of tickets

⁷³ BN, Fonds français 22115, “Arrest du Conseil d’État du Roi. Concernant la Loterie de la ville de Paris, établie par arrêt du Conseil du 30 Juillet 1760. Du 22 Décembre 1760.”

which can cause it [the city] an absolute loss [*une perte réelle*].”⁷⁴ That is, the officials were ostensibly worried about owing more in winning lots than the lottery actually took in. So the December order started with an expressed concern about preventing losses, which would seem to indicate concern about the lottery’s viability. Yet the rest of the order is a major expansion of the Loterie de la Ville. It was no longer limited to a total receipt of 2,400,000 livres per drawing. By law, it was now possible to sell as many tickets as the lottery could. Also, the lottery would now be drawn every month, not every other month. And the lottery could now sell tickets throughout France, not just in Paris. The December order expanded the lottery market chronologically and geographically by increasing the potential number of tickets sold and expanded the potential market to all of France, while also allowing for more drawings. In essence, the Loterie de la Ville went from a fixed lottery to an unlimited potential behemoth of a lottery that would in many ways change the lottery landscape not only in Paris but throughout France.

Unfortunately, we do not have records of ticket sales for the Loterie de la Ville, but all indications are that things went well. Indeed, things went well enough that in 1762 the city asked Controller General Bertin for a fifteen-year extension of its privilege. Bertin, however, had serious concerns about the Loterie de la Ville’s devastating effect on the *trois petites loteries*, and he had misgivings more generally about the new lottery. He quickly denied the fifteen-year extension, noting that such a lengthy extension would be tantamount to a “perpetual lottery,” to which only the *trois loteries* had a legitimate claim. But Bertin was reluctant to do away with the new lottery altogether. No doubt the financial pressures at the end of the Seven Years War made Bertin loath to remove any financial instrument that could ease the demands on the royal treasury. He also hoped

⁷⁴ Ibid., “chargée d’un nombre de billets qui peuvent lui causer une perte réelle.”

that the ending of the war and the onset of peace would stoke the economy and consequently lottery ticket sales. Bertin reluctantly granted a three-year extension to the Loterie de la Ville, despite the protests of the administrators of the *trois loteries*.⁷⁵

No doubt the constant political struggle with the parlements over taxations coupled with the demands of the war played a part in Bertin's decision to grant a more limited extension, just as it had in the initial privilege in 1760. Though Bertin had an unquestionable prejudice against lotteries, he succumbed to a compromised position once again. At the beginning of his tenure as Controller General, Bertin claimed that he was always looking for the right moment to liberalize the grain trade. Ideologically he supported the freeing of the grain trade, but practically speaking, he was looking for the most advantageous opportunity. In the final analysis, Bertin was a pragmatist more than an ideologue.⁷⁶ He approached the Loterie de la Ville much the same way. He was willing to accept a lottery only as a practical matter of financial expediency. Even as he presided over a fundamental change and significant expansion in the lottery system, he continued to think of lotteries in traditional terms as both temporary and morally suspect.

Unfortunately for Bertin, fiscal expediency became a permanent condition of the French state. The disastrous Seven Years War mercifully ended in 1763 leaving the French gasping for breath under the weight of a mountain of war debt. Ever the cautious pragmatist, Bertin tried to push through the parlements a continuation of the wartime taxes to help pay down the accumulated debt. The parlementaires, who protested wartime taxes even during the war, balked at the continuation of those taxes during peace. The political dispute ultimately led to Bertin's recall as minister at the end of

⁷⁵ AN, G9 114, "Memoire" from 1766 which is reproduced within the April 5, 1770 memoire.

⁷⁶ Kaplan, *Bread, Politics, and Political Economy*, 132.

1763.⁷⁷ Bertin's disgrace served as yet another example of the growing weakness of that office during Louis XV's reign. It also served as an example of the fate that befell ministers who promulgated politically difficult and unpopular fiscal measures like taxes.

The municipal officials in Paris hoped to take advantage of this change in ministers and hoped that the new minister, L'Averdy, would be friendlier toward lotteries. Unlike other Controller Generals, L'Averdy was a somewhat obscure figure, and historians have had difficulty piecing together his ideas.⁷⁸ After Bertin's bitter battles with the parlements, the monarchy sought reconciliation and L'Averdy was picked with that in mind. He was a member of the Paris parlement himself and suspected of holding Jansenist sympathies. As one of their own, the magistrates welcomed his selection as the new Controller General. At the same time, L'Averdy was a reformer. In fact, Madame de Pompadour hailed him as one of the greatest reformers of the century. He was even more friendly to the physiocrats than Bertin. In 1764, he even allowed grain exports, a measure Bertin considered too dangerous. Like Bertin, however, L'Averdy was not an ideologue. He freed grain exports, but created a safeguard mechanism which would freeze exports if grain prices rose above a certain level.⁷⁹

In 1766, the city of Paris asked L'Averdy for yet another extension of its lottery. Hoping that the change in ministers would lead to a change in policy, the city asked for a thirty-year extension, which would essentially make the lottery permanent in all but name. L'Averdy initially approved this lengthy extension, but Bertin, who had rejected a fifteen-year extension in 1762, had not lost his power and influence and intervened

⁷⁷ Kwass, *Privilege and the Politics of Taxation*, 179-189.

⁷⁸ For a comprehensive study of L'Averdy and his time as Controller General, see Félix, *Finances et politique au siècle des Lumières: Le ministère L'Averdy, 1763-1768*.

⁷⁹ Kaplan, *Bread, Politics, and Political Economy*, 140-142; Shovlin, *Political Economy of Virtue*, 102-104.

against it. In 1763, Bertin had been given a whole new secrétariat d'État, mainly on account of his close friendship with the king. This newly-created department oversaw mines, canals, agriculture, and lotteries, among other things. Thus, even though Bertin had lost his direct control over finances, there was rarely a question of finance or economics in which he did not play a role.⁸⁰ Bertin took an immediate interest in the new extension request and the subsequent approval of that extension. He acted quickly and “suspended the signing of it until he [Bertin] had instructed M. de L'Averdy about everything that had happened, at the time of the establishment of the Loterie de la Ville, its extension, and finally the principles upon which this decision had been based.”⁸¹ He then commissioned a detailed memoir which explained the history of the Loterie de la Ville as well as Bertin's view of the *trois loteries* and lotteries more generally. The 1766 memoir also included the extensive comparative study, discussed earlier, of the sales and profits of the *trois loteries*—certainly included as evidence of the Loterie de la Ville's ill effect.

Bertin's 1766 memoir to L'Averdy began by distinguishing between great and small lotteries. According to Bertin, the *grandes loteries* were of a fixed nature both in the number of tickets sold and the amount of prize money distributed. They were also generally of limited duration and often to just one isolated drawing, or to several drawings but within a fixed time—they were not perpetual in nature. The second type, he explained,

⁸⁰ Bayard, *Dictionnaire des surintendants et contrôleurs généraux des finances*, 159-163.

⁸¹ AN, G9 114, the document this information is from is simply titled “Memoire” and has “Loterie d'hôtel de ville de Paris” written in the upper left corner. It is dated April 5, 1770 and gives a fairly lengthy history of the Loterie de la Ville. It seems to have been commissioned by Bertin, and as such I will refer to him as the author. “il suspendit de la signer jusqu'a ce qu'il eut instruit M. de L'Averdy de tout ce qui s'étoit passé, lors de l'établissement de la loterie de la ville, de sa prorogation; enfin des principes sur les quels cette decision étoit fondée.”

are the *petites loteries* which are drawn every month for the sum of the tickets that were distributed; such are the lotteries of the Enfants Trouvés, the Communautés Religieuses, and of the Pieté [previously known as the Loterie de Saint-Sulpice]. The profit is modest, but it is renewed every month, and it is the principal resource of the establishments of charity and of pious works to which His Majesty has intended it.⁸²

As Bertin interpreted the lotteries, the great lotteries were, and should be, of a limited nature with a fixed number of tickets and a fixed amount of money to be raised. In other words, they were ideally suited for individual projects with fixed costs, and thus, would be temporary in nature. The *petites loteries*, on the other hand, were, and should be, continuous and perpetual in nature. They were meant to provide a steady source of funds for on-going works of charity and piety. In this way, Bertin not only delimited two types of lotteries, but he also created a moral continuum for judging the legitimacy of lotteries. That moral continuum judged lotteries based upon two things: the uses of the funds raised and the structures of the lotteries. Charitable uses were the most legitimate, and if charity was not the end of a lottery, then the lottery's structure had to be limited. In other words, Bertin privileged the *trois loteries* as morally superior to the Loterie de la Ville.

Bertin also emphasized the fragility and vulnerability of the *petites loteries*. “The sales of the *petites loteries* are proportionate to the number, always more or less equal, of people who play them [the lotteries] regularly,” he explained. The market, in other words, was fixed. Any increase of the ticket prices, stakes, or establishing of new lotteries would only cause “harm to the sales of the former [*petites loteries*] and which

⁸² AN, G9 114, “Memoire” from 1766 which is reproduced within the April 5, 1770 memoire. “sont de petites loteries qui se tirent tous les mois, pour la somme de billet qui se trouve distribuée; telles sont les loteries des Enfants trouvés, des communautés religieuses, celle de Pieté & le benefice en est modique, mais il se renouvelle tous les mois, il est la principale ressource des établissements de charité et des oeuvres piet auxquelles Sa Majesté l’a destiné.”

decreases proportionately.”⁸³ Everything in the memoir leaves the reader with the impression that the *petites loteries* were precarious and at the mercy of the ticket buyers. Even the slightest disruption might lead to dramatic swings in sales and profits as ticket buyers took their business elsewhere. Bertin cautioned L’Averdy that the *petites loteries*, despite their clearer moral legitimacy, hung in a precarious balance.

After explaining the moral economy of the lotteries, which he saw in a rather traditional manner, Bertin went on to recount to L’Averdy the recent history behind the Loterie de la Ville. Bertin had barely come into office as Controller General, he noted, when he had set about to find,

some means of reestablishing the sales of the *petites loteries*...when the Hôtel de Ville asked for a lottery; it should have been, following from the plan presented, a *grand loterie*, one of those of the first type, for a large sum and which, once drawn, should no longer have been at issue: but this plan was fully considered and it was thought unable to succeed and that its poor success would only increase the city’s so-called needs.

It was against every rule and against every principle to grant to the city of Paris a continuing lottery [*loterie tournante*] of the second type. Giving cities a revenue of this kind had dangerous consequences...and it succeeded in destroying the other lotteries which had already suffered indescribably from the increase of 4 sous which caused infinite harm to the charitable institutions which depend on the revenue from them.⁸⁴

Bertin depicted the Loterie de la Ville as a break from tradition. Indeed, the Loterie de la Ville actively deviated from “every principle” that surrounded the use of lotteries. By

⁸³ Ibid., “Le debit des petites loteries est proportionné au nombre, toujours a peu près egal, des personnes qui y jouent habituellement”; “Si l’on fait une loterie de plus ou qu’on en augmente la mise le debit de la nouvelle ne s’établit qu’au prejudice du debit des anciennes qui diminuent en proportion.”

⁸⁴ AN, G9 114, the document this information is from is simply titled “Memoire” and has “Loterie d’hôtel de ville de Paris” written in the upper left corner, dated April 5, 1770. “des moyens de rétablir le produit des petites loteries...quand l’hôtel de ville demanda la loterie; elle devoit etre, suivant le plan qui fut présenté, une grand loterie, de celles de la premiere espece, d’une somme considerable et dont (une fois tirée) il ne devoit plus etre question: mais ce Plan, bien examiné, il fut dit qu’il ne pouvoit réussir et que son mauvais succès augmenteroit le desir dit de la ville.

Il etoit contre toute regle et contre toute principe d’accorder a la ville de Paris une loterie tournante et de la 2e espece, il etoit d’une dangereuse consequence de donner aux villes un revenue de cette espece...et il acheveroit de détruire les autres loteries qui souffrient deja infiniment de l’augmentation des 4 sols; ce qui nuisoit infiniment aux etablissements de charité qui subsistoient de leurs produits.”

portraying the Loterie de la Ville as an unprecedented break from tradition, Bertin implicitly held up the *trois petites loteries* as standing for the traditional “principles” that had always guided the lotteries and government regulation of them.

The “traditional” nature of the *trois loteries* only made their decline more difficult for Bertin to accept. And according to the 1766 comparative study that was included with the memoir, the effect of the Loterie de la Ville on the *trois petites loteries* was immediate and consequential.⁸⁵ The most direct comparison was an examination of the three lotteries and their sales and profits for the years 1759 and 1760 compared to the same figures for the years 1761 and 1762—that is, the two years immediately before the Loterie de la Ville was established and the two years immediately after. The study shows that the Loterie des Communautés Religieuses had total sales of 2,691,000 livres in the first two-year period with a profit of 560,750 livres. For the second two-year period it had sales of only 1,815,600 livres for a profit of 378,250 livres. In the “Observations,” written at the bottom of this single sheet, Bertin did not hesitate to place blame for this decline on the new lottery: “the loterie de la ville diminished the receipts of the communautés [religieuses] by 876,000 livres and its profit by 182,500 livres.”⁸⁶ The study also presented a comparative table of the Loterie des Communautés Religieuses “before and after the Loterie de la Ville during three years of peace.” This table compares two three-year periods, 1753-1755 and 1763-1765. It shows total receipts for the first period of 5,924,300 livres with a profit of 963,825 livres for the first period and total receipts of 2,496,000 livres with a profit of 520,000 livres for the second period. In

⁸⁵ The study was written under the direction of Bertin and thus reveals Bertin’s point of view. As such, I will refer to him as the author of the study.

⁸⁶ AN, G9 114, “4 Autres Comparaisons,” “Loterie des Communautés, Comparaison du produit de cette Loterie depuis et avant celle de la ville pendant 2 années de guerre.”; “la loterie de la ville a fait diminuer la recette de celle des communautés de 876,000 livres et son benefice de 182, 500 livres.”

his “Observations” here as well, Bertin makes a point of noting explicitly that “the Loterie de la Ville decreased the receipt of the [Loterie de] Communautés [Religieuses] by 3,428,300 livres, and its profit by 443,825 livres.”⁸⁷ This particular comparison is a bit misleading since most of the first period examined took place before the March 1, 1755 price increase, which also had a negative impact on sales of lottery tickets. Regardless, Bertin intended to make absolutely clear that the Loterie de la Ville had had a negative impact on the *trois petites loteries*. He presented both the immediate impact in his first comparative table which happened to coincide with years of war, but as if to emphasize the effect of the new lottery, he also then compared years of peace. Regardless of how misleading this second comparison may be, Bertin used it to emphasize the harm done to the *trois loteries*, which had experienced a steady decline since March 1, 1755.

Bertin concluded his memoir by noting again that the lotteries had already suffered greatly from the 1755 price increase. As he notes, he had just come into office and had every intention of finding some way of helping the *trois petites loteries*, which he clearly saw as “traditional” and “principled,” when the nefarious city of Paris hoodwinked the government into subverting the traditional principles. Bertin explains that he approved the new lottery to keep the city out of the financial disaster that had threatened, but the lottery “was not for the conveniences of the people of Paris and the improvements for the capital as they wanted everyone to think.” These things, Bertin pointed out, were unlimited, and it was rather ridiculous to have a fixed, short-term lottery, as the lottery was originally intended, for continuing regular expenses. But

⁸⁷ AN, G9 114, “4 Autres Comparaisons,” “Loterie des Communautés Religieuses, Comparaison de cette Loterie avant et depuis la Loterie de la Ville pendant 3 ans de paix.”; “La loterie de la ville a fait diminuer la recette de celle des communautés de 3,428,300 livres et son benefice de 443,825 livres.”

allowing a lottery to pay for regular and recurring expenses set a dangerous precedent. Rather than pay for the necessary improvement for the city of Paris as the July 30, 1760 order claimed, the lottery was actually used in large part to “pay the arreages of the creditors of the Hôtel du Soisson, [and] of the Hôtel de Conti, which were paid annually to the royal treasury...it is true that this motive was not announced in the order of July 30, 1760...but it was announced expressly in an order of the same day by which the town was charged with paying the debts with the product of this lottery.”⁸⁸ Bertin took particular offense at this aspect of the new lottery. Not only was it causing real harm to the *trois loteries*, but a significant part of the funds of the Loterie de la Ville were being surreptitiously funneled to help the indebted great nobles of the kingdom. The lottery was practically stealing food from the mouths of the foundlings supported by the Loterie des Enfants Trouvés and not for the general good of the people of Paris but for the great lords. Bertin could tolerate a lottery if he had to, but it would have to support the larger public good and not private advantage.

Bertin’s efforts to minimize the impact of the new lottery on the old ones paid off when significant revisions to the Loterie de la Ville were made by royal edict in 1766. As we have seen, the new lottery’s tickets were priced at 24 livres, but because each ticket could be split into 40 coupons, the real ticket price was effectively 12 sous. The *trois loteries* on the other hand did not have this “coupon” feature, so their ticket price of 24 sous was effectively twice the price of the tickets of the Loterie de la Ville. The 12

⁸⁸ AN, G9 114, “Memoire” from 1766 which is reproduced within the April 5, 1770 memoire. “ce ne fut point, comme on a voulu le faire croire dans la suite, pour les commodités des habitants de la ville de Paris et des embellissemens de la capitale”; “ce fut pour acquitter les arrerages dûs aux creanciers de l’hotel du Soissons, de l’hotel de Conti qui se payoient annuellement au tresor royal...mais il fut annoncé expressement, dans un arret du même jour ou la ville est chargé d’acquitter ces dettes avec le produit de sa loterie.”

sous coupon structure thus gave the Loterie de la Ville a competitive advantage since it was the most price accessible lottery to the largest cross section of the population. In 1766, the king returned the *trois loteries*' competitive edge by declaring that the Loterie de la Ville could sell partial tickets for no less than 6 livres each.⁸⁹

The government did grant the Loterie de la Ville a ten-year extension, but it made clear that this would be the absolute last extension. It also ensured that the funds would be used for the public well-being and not for the benefit of any individual by insisting that the funds were strictly to be used for the city's improvement, including specifically the enlargement of the Place du Palais Royal and the building of a sewer system along the rue St. Honoré. Bertin ended his memoir by making clear that the Loterie de la Ville was an aberration and had to be an aberration. He claimed that "one sees clearly by the preceding details that the city of Paris has, for 8 to 10 years, used every means imaginable in order to perpetuate" its lottery, but that the ministers have understood the importance of not extending a lottery "from which the city will profit at the expense of the institutions of piety and charity which have the right to the product of lotteries."⁹⁰

The Loterie de la Ville thus left an ambiguous imprint on the lottery system. Bertin made every effort to finally determine the purpose of the lotteries as strictly charitable, certainly for perpetual lotteries. And yet by the mere act of approving a perpetual lottery and its continued extensions, the government altered the lottery system in a very real way. Indeed, despite Bertin's efforts, the Loterie de la Ville was an inexorable force that pried the charitable lottery system apart. It set the precedent for a

⁸⁹ AN, G9 114, "Memoire" April 5, 1770 memoire.

⁹⁰ Ibid., "on voit clairement par les detail qui precedent que la ville de Paris a employé depuis 8 a 10 ans tous les moyens imaginable pour perpetuer"; "dont la ville profiteroit au prejudice des etablissemens de Pieté et de charité qui ont droit au produit des loteries."

perpetual lottery outside of strictly charitable purposes that directly competed with the *trois petites loteries*. But perhaps most importantly and fundamentally, the Loterie de la Ville set the precedent for perpetual lotteries to be used by governments for ongoing, ordinary expenditures. The cat was out of the bag with the lottery boom, and the forces of charity had lost control.

Conclusion

The lottery system underwent tremendous change in the middle decades of the eighteenth century. The collective organization of the Loterie des Enfants Trouvés, the Loterie de Saint-Sulpice, and the Loterie des Communautés Religieuses in 1727 brought into existence, for the first time in France, perpetual lotteries. The French had known lotteries for nearly two centuries, but this was the first time that French people could anticipate a drawing every tenth, twentieth, and last day of the month. The perpetual nature of the *trois petites loteries* was in itself a major paradigm shift in the French lottery system, and was itself inherently destabilizing, but the one ostensible force of stability was that these lotteries supported works of piety and charity.

As the lotteries grew in popularity and profit, they came under greater scrutiny and notice from others. The very success of the lotteries brought outside pressure as different groups sought to take advantage of this mid-eighteenth century lottery boom. We see this with the Great Altercation in which the lottery administrators were able to fend off the Comédie Française in large part by discursively defining the lotteries in a charitable and traditional manner. But that was certainly not the last challenge to the

trois loteries, and they were again imposed upon in 1755 in order to rebuild Sainte-Geneviève. We do not know the exact details of how the 1755 price increase went through, but it was nonetheless an expansion of the lottery system. A greater percentage of the lottery revenue was now being taken in the form of profits and the sheer number of projects that the lotteries supported had increased. And finally, the Loterie de la Ville firmly broke from the traditional lottery system by instituting a perpetual lottery that was not strictly charitable.

Through all of these events, the three original foundations supported by the *trois petites loteries* suffered considerably as their lottery profits declined. However, while the general lottery expansion weakened the *trois loteries*, it did not weaken the market for lottery tickets. Rather, it injected competitive forces into the lottery market. Now consumers had choices. In his *Journal of my Journey to Paris in the Year 1765*, the Englishman William Cole describes his French valet's passion for lottery tickets.

This Day my French valet was so drunk that I was quite ashamed of him in the Abbey Church of St Germain-des-Prez: I told him if he was so again, when he was to go out with me, that I would discharge him: he made an Excuse, that he had been at a Cabaret with a Man who owed him some Money & had paid him, & that they had been bargaining together about some of their Lottery Tickets; of which they have so great Variety & so great Plenty, that it is no small Prejudice to the common People, who ruin themselves in gaming at them.⁹¹

Setting aside Cole's moralizing discourse about popular class "ruin," his journal entry clearly indicates that a quite common Parisian was buying multiple lottery tickets and that there was a multitude of lotteries from which his valet could choose. In the 1740s, the lotteries worried about consumers not purchasing tickets, but now they had to worry about consumers taking their business to other easily accessible lotteries. The business of being in lotteries had changed quite dramatically over the course of a few decades. The

⁹¹ Cole, *Journal of my Journey to Paris in the Year 1765*, 166.

lotteries were no longer strictly charitable enterprises raising “donations.” They were now competitive bureaucracies that had to compete with others for their financial life. The *trois loteries* found themselves pushed to the sidelines in the new commercial atmosphere that had begun to take over the lottery system.

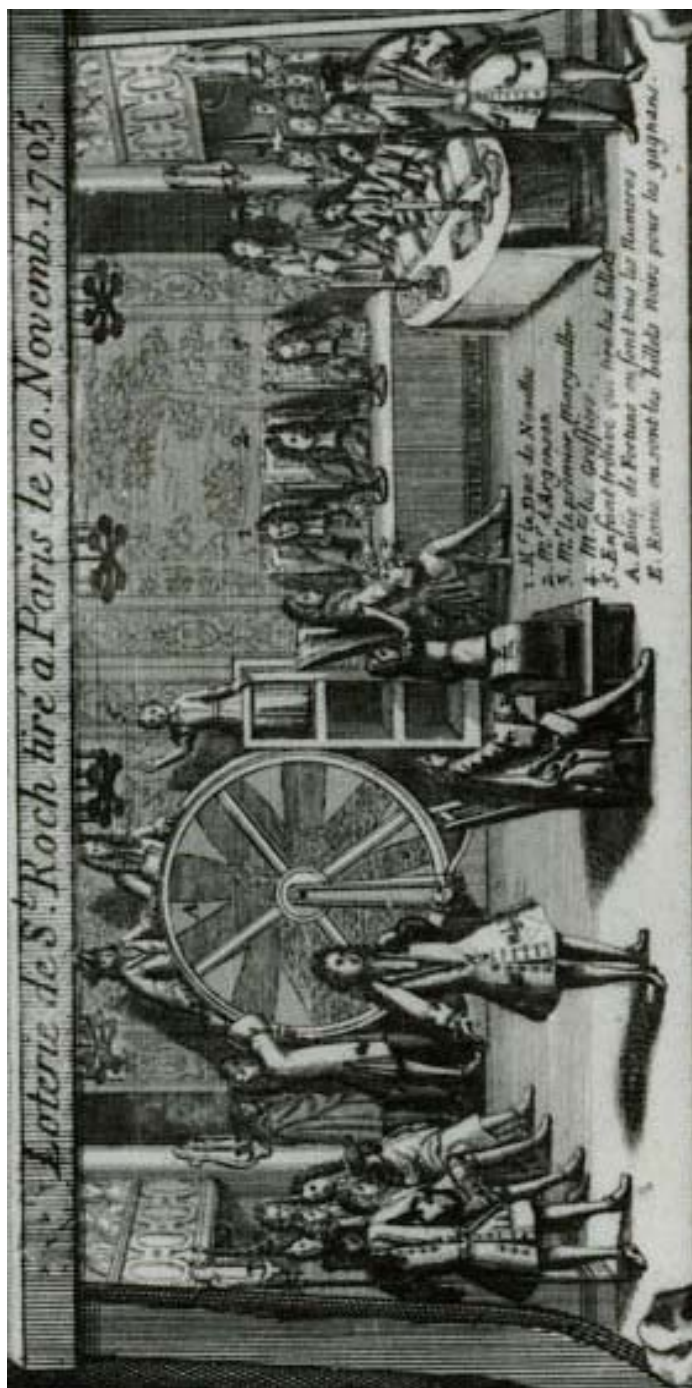


Image 2.2: Inset of Image 2.1 at the bottom center.



Image 2.3: Lottery ticket for the January 1772 drawing of the Loterie des Communautés Religieuses.



Image 2.4: Lottery ticket for the September 1777 drawing of the Loterie de Piété (previously known as the Loterie de Saint-Sulpice).

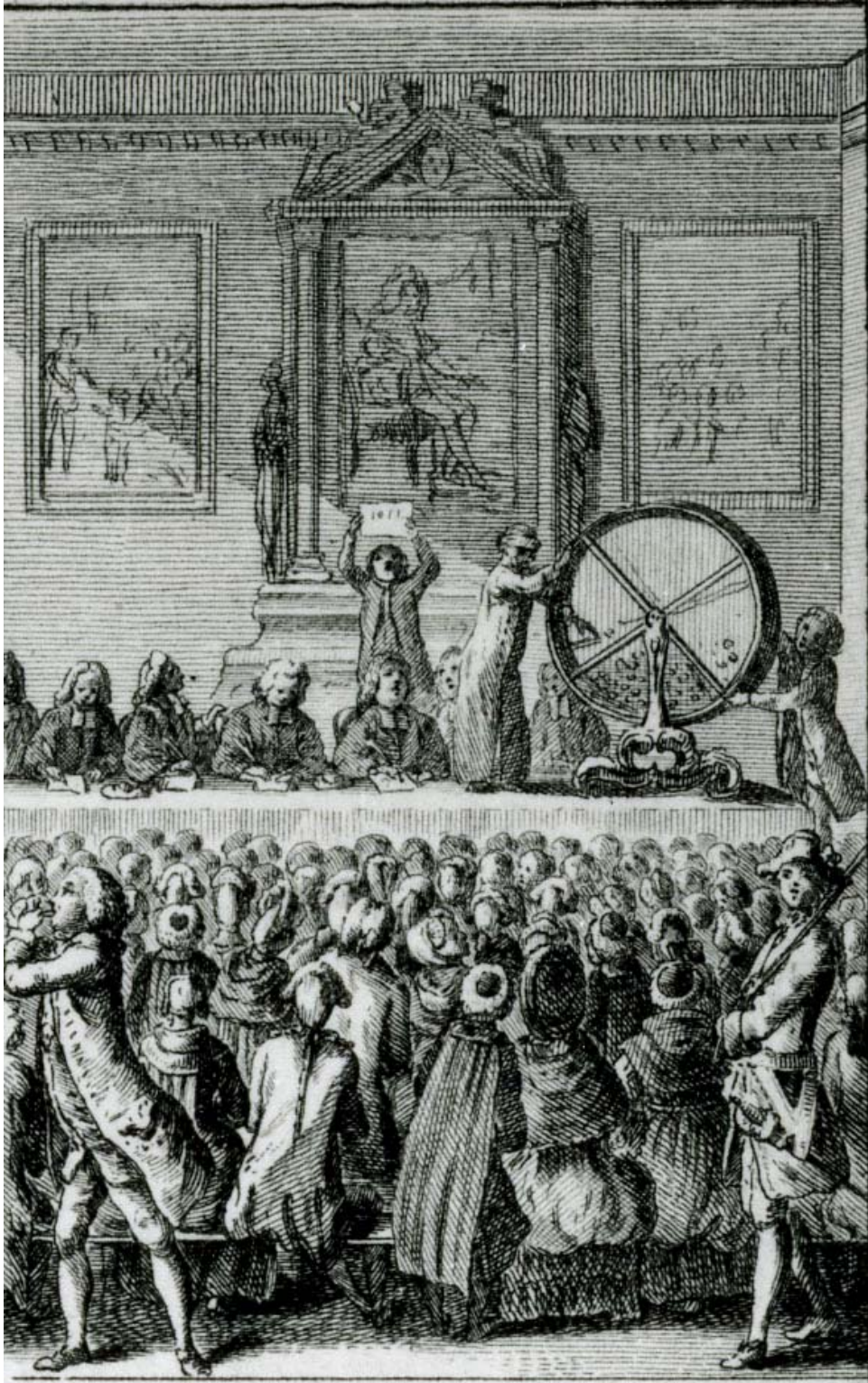


Image 2.5: *Le Tirage* (n.d., Musée Carnavalet, Paris)

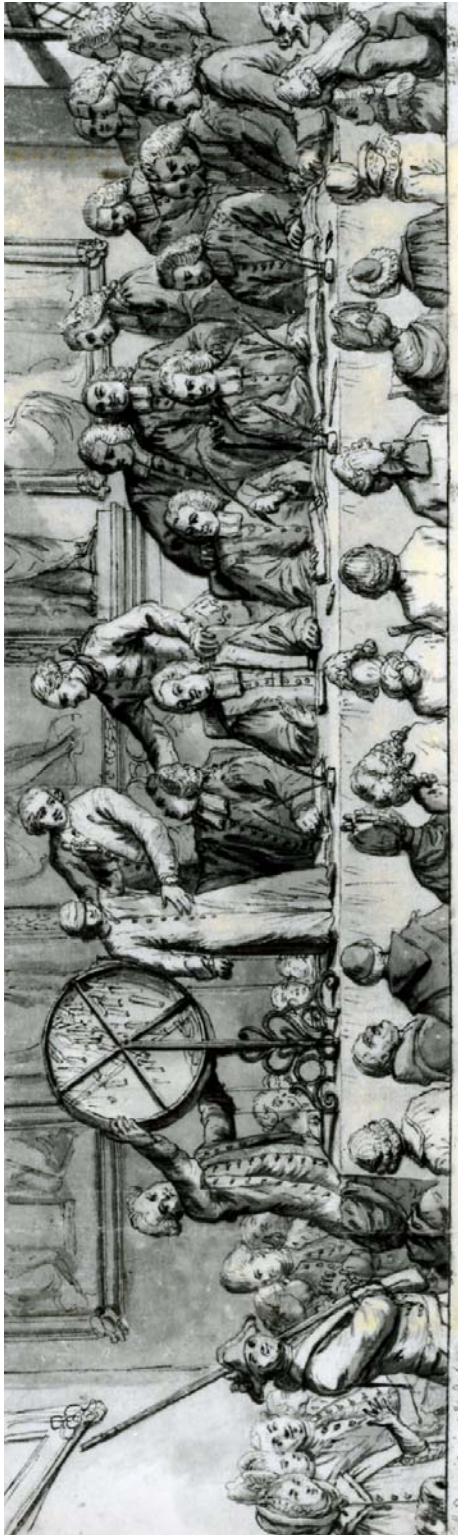


Image 2.6: *Tirage de la loterie en 1772* (1772, Musée Carnavalet, Paris).

TREIZIÈME LOTÉRIE

D E
L'HÔTEL DE VILLE DE PARIS,

Établie par Arrêts du Conseil des 30 Juillet & 22 Décembre 1760.

DE PAR LES PREVÔT DES MARCHANDS ET ÉCHEVINS.

LE PUBLIC est averti que les Billets de la treizième Loterie de la Ville, toujours fixés au nombre de *Vingt mille*, commenceront d'être distribués le 15 Décembre 1761, jour du Tirage de la douzième Loterie, tant à l'Hôtel de Ville que dans les autres Bureaux établis à Paris & dans les Provinces; & que ladite Loterie sera tirée le jour du mois de Janvier qui sera indiqué par de nouvelles affiches.

On trouvera dans tous les Bureaux de la Loterie, DES COUPONS DE MOITIÉ, QUART ET HUITIÈME DES BILLETS, pour la facilité des personnes qui veulent s'intéresser à ladite Loterie pour des sommes au dessous de la mise entière.

DISTRIBUTION DES LOTS

Au nombre de douze cents, donnant au Public soixante Lots par mille Billets.

Lots.	de	Liers.
1	de	50000.
1	de	20000.
2	de	20000.
2	de	10000 ¹ .
2	de	5000.
3	de	3000.
4	de	2000.
6	de	1500.
36	de	1000.
70	de	500.
200	de	300.
875	de	200.
1200 Lots		432000.
	BÉNÉFICE à 10 pour $\frac{1}{2}$	48000.
	TOTAL pour 20000 Billets à 24 ¹	480000.

LES LOTS SERONT PAYÉS COMPTANT ET SANS DÉDUCTION.

Les Billets continueront d'être délivrés à Paris, tant à l'Hôtel de Ville que chez M.^{rs} les Notaires; & les Sociétés, qui continueront d'être fabriquées chez le S.^r REGNAULT, rue de Buffon, & signées de lui & du S.^r MORISSET, se trouveront, pour la commodité du Public, chez les Receveurs établis dans les différents quartiers de cette Ville.

BUREAUX DES PROVINCES.

<p>AIX M.^{re} COUSSIN, Distributeur de la Formule.</p> <p>AMIENS ANCELET, Directeur du droit sur les Cartes.</p> <p>BORDEAUX Veuve SARADE & fils, Négocians.</p> <p>CAEN BARON, Receveur de l'Ecole Militaire.</p> <p>CLERMONT CHAVAGNAT, Négociant.</p> <p>GRENOBLE PRIÉ, Notaire.</p> <p>LA ROCHELLE. BOUILLÉ, Secrétaire de l'Intendance.</p> <p>LILLE CUVELLIER DE MARACCY, Négociant.</p>	<p>LYON M.^{re} BOIN, Secrétaire de l'Intendance, & Receveur du Prêt & Annuel.</p> <p>MARSEILLE . . { JAYNE, } Marchands Libraires.</p> <p>METZ CHAPRON, premier Commis de la Poste.</p> <p>MONTAUBAN . . LE VASSEUR, ci-devant Receveur de la Ville de Toulouse.</p> <p>MONTPELLIER. VERNIER, Secrétaire de l'Intendance.</p> <p>NANTES PELLETIER, Receveur de l'Ecole Militaire.</p>	<p>ORLÉANS M.^{re} DAVID.</p> <p>POITIERS . . . M.^{re} CREUZÉ, Directeur des Fermes.</p> <p>RENNES VASTAR, Marchand Libraire, à la Science.</p> <p>ROUEN DORÉ, Directeur des Vivres de la Province.</p> <p>SOISSONS BEDEL, Notaire & Greffier de l'Election.</p> <p>STRASBOURG . . LAFOND, premier Commis des Vivres.</p> <p>TOULOUSE . . . LAUZERAL, premier Commis de la Poste.</p> <p>TOURS COLLEIN, Directeur du droit sur les Cartes.</p> <p>VALENCIENNES. HINAULT, <i>idem</i>.</p>
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A PARIS. DE L'IMPRIMERIE ROYALE. 1761.

Image 2.7: Affiche for the Loterie de l'Hôtel de Ville de Paris (1761, Musée Carnavalet, Paris).

Chapter 3:
The Loterie de l'École Royale Militaire:
Making the Lottery Noble, Patriotic, and National

The École Royale Militaire was founded in 1751 to educate the impoverished nobility of France in their traditional roles as warriors for the French king. The institution was operated with the approval of the king and under his patronage.¹ Within just a few years the school ran into financial problems. A key benefactor and the First Intendant of the Military School was Joseph de Pâris-Duverney—one of the great financiers of the eighteenth century and a leading financier to Louis XV.² It was his duty as First Intendant to find a financial solution to the predicament. He eventually settled upon a lottery scheme that would bring in enough profit to continue the school's building and operations. This plan ultimately came to fruition with a royal decree founding the Loterie de l'École Royale Militaire on October 14, 1757.

The advent of this new lottery destabilized the French lottery system on two fronts. First, there was a major cultural and intellectual tension inherent in a lottery meant to support the French nobility. The means of the very modern enterprise of the

¹ Rafe Blaufarb, *The French Army, 1750-1820: Careers, Talent, Merit* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2002), 20-24.

² Robert Laulan, "La Loterie de l'École Militaire, mere de la Loterie Nationale," *Revue des travaux de l'Académie des sciences morales & politiques et comptes rendus de ses seances* (1951), 31-34; John Shovlin, *The Political Economy of Virtue: Luxury, Patriotism, and the Origins of the French Revolution* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2006), 80-81.

lottery seemed to be at odds with the end of supporting the very traditional Old Regime institution of the nobility in its traditional military role. The nobility was portrayed as the selfless warrior class dedicated to something larger than themselves, namely the aid of king and *patrie*, while lottery ticket consumers bought tickets in selfish hopes of expanding their personal wealth. This new lottery sat on a seismic fault line between new, modern commercial enterprise and traditional Old Regime culture. The new lottery would have to reconcile this tension.

And second, this new lottery destabilized the lottery system by fundamentally altering and enlarging the geographic, administrative, and political scope of French lotteries. The Loterie de l'École Militaire would be the first national lottery to be guaranteed by the French state.³ It would also become the largest lottery that Europe had ever known. This was an entirely new enterprise and undertaking for which there was no model. Just like the École Militaire, the lottery would have to be built from the ground up. This drastically altered the way in which lotteries were conceived.

This chapter will be organized around the resolving of these two tensions. First, I will examine the intellectual and cultural tensions that the Loterie de l'École Militaire brought to the surface. And second, the chapter will outline the problems that resulted from the building of an elaborate national administration and bureaucracy. The goal of this chapter is to explain how the Loterie de l'École Militaire negotiated and resolved these tensions and problems to bring about a fundamental shift and expansion of the French lottery system.

³ Francis Freundlich, *Le monde du jeu à Paris (1715-1800)* (Paris: Albin Michel, 1995), 142-144; Laulan, "La Loterie de l'École Militaire," 29-38.

Rousseau and the Noblesse Commerçante

Few writers shook the intellectual foundations of the eighteenth century and had as much influence as Jean-Jacques Rousseau. And there are perhaps few people from the eighteenth century who capture the imagination more than Giacomo Casanova. These two men are almost dichotomously opposed intellectually. Rousseau was the notorious moralist who disdained society and luxury. Casanova found polite society and material excess irresistible. Indeed, Casanova is almost caricaturized as the stereotypical eighteenth-century libertine. Rousseau very much tried to ground and plant himself as a “citizen of Geneva,” while Casanova was a widely celebrated itinerant “adventurer.” Seeming to have no roots, Casanova traveled throughout Europe and made himself at ease wherever he may have been. Rousseau celebrated the genuineness of austere simplicity; Casanova celebrated the artifice of audacious luxuriance. In Rousseau’s delineation of the general will, we have the most distinct pronouncement of selflessness. In Casanova’s delineation of the ethos of libertinage, we have the most distinct pronouncement of egoism. It is very much the tension between these two different self-constructions which played out with the Loterie de l’École Militaire.

The founding of the Military School in 1751 corresponded roughly with the first appearance of Rousseau’s famous and highly influential *Discourse on the Sciences and Arts* in November 1750 in which he sharply criticized modern society and its material progress. In his widely popular response to the Dijon Academy’s essay contest on whether or not the advancement of the sciences and arts had helped to purify morals, Rousseau responded resoundingly in the negative. Rousseau argued that not only had they not led to the purification of morals but in fact they had corrupted morals. For

Rousseau, society was not in a state of progress but in a state of decay. Luxury was at the center of this decay with moral corruption emanating from it. Luxury was the core problem which then allowed for all others to follow. As Rousseau wrote, “luxury is seldom found without the sciences and arts, and they are never found without it.” It was after all luxury and wealth that sustained the arts.⁴

Luxury and ostentation were great evils but he also attacked contemporary society and political thinkers for speaking “only of commerce and of money.”⁵ Rousseau argued that luxury, money, and commerce were at the root of modern moral corruption. He asked rhetorically if anyone could “deny that good morals are essential if Empires are to endure, and that luxury is diametrically opposed to good morals?”⁶ Rousseau thus inextricably linked the political destiny of states with their economic and moral destiny. Virtuous men thought not of their own material well-being, rather they were citizens who were useful to their society and thought only of their *patrie*. Rousseau lamented that “the labors of our most enlightened learned men and our best Citizens provide us with so little that is useful” and they “devour the State’s substance at a pure loss.”⁷ Luxury was critical to Rousseau because it was emblematic of the selfish and egotistical drive for material wealth. It was this egoism that was inherently dangerous to a society which would be better served by “citizens” who selflessly thought only of the *patrie*.

For Rousseau, military service was one of the greatest ways to show patriotic devotion and it was one of the most pure forms of selfless dedication. Indeed, Rousseau placed luxury and military service at completely opposite ends of his moral spectrum

⁴ Jean-Jacques Rousseau, “Discourse on the Sciences and Arts,” in *The First and Second Discourses*, translated by Victor Gourevitch (New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1986), 14, 16.

⁵ Ibid., 16.

⁶ Ibid., 16.

⁷ Ibid., 15.

with egoism on one end and selflessness on the other. If only “the Sciences purified morals, if they taught men to shed their blood for the Fatherland,” then no nation that had advanced science would be enslaved, but unfortunately the opposite was true, Rousseau argued.⁸ Giving the example of Rome, he claimed that “Rome filled up with the Philosophers and Orators; military discipline came to be neglected...and the Fatherland forgotten.”⁹ Military service was the highest ideal for Rousseau because it was the most selfless devotion to the *patrie*, and indeed, one had to be of use to one’s fellow citizens. That was, after all, the problem with the vain arts. Writers thought only of their own egotistical vanity and reputation and were thereby useless to their fellow citizens and “every useless citizen may be looked upon as a pernicious man.”¹⁰ This is particularly evident in his discussion of ancient Athens and Sparta. While many enlightened men of letters liked to think of Paris as the new Athens, Rousseau definitively rejected the Athenian model. Athens was a city of great poets and painters, but in Sparta, men were simple and virtuous.¹¹ In Sparta, men did not concern themselves with the egotistical trappings of ostentation and luxury but with selfless service to the *patrie*. “While the conveniences of life increase, the arts improve, and luxury spreads, true courage in enervated, the military virtues vanish.”¹² The selfless military virtues of Sparta were thus juxtaposed to the selfish artistic virtues of Athens.

Rousseau’s *Discourse on the Sciences and Arts* brought about much discussion of French civilization more generally and coincided with a fervent public discussion of luxury. More, perhaps, than any other writer, Rousseau vividly captured the sense that

⁸ Ibid., 8.

⁹ Ibid., 12.

¹⁰ Ibid., 15.

¹¹ Ibid., 10.

¹² Ibid., 19.

French society and culture were in decline.¹³ The 1750s was also a decade of great debate about the role of the nobility in French society. Much of the second estate's social prestige and *raison d'être* had historically been its service to the king as the warrior class. The sale of offices and ennoblement under Louis XIV and his successors had diluted the second estate to the point that it had something of an identity crisis. The debates of the 1750s thus revolved around the essence of the nobility. Some writers argued that the nobility were the ancient protectors of France and they should remain within their traditional, military role and thus be excluded from participation in financial and commercial endeavors. They argued that the nobility was noble because it sacrificed itself through selfless military service to the king and *patrie*, while merchants and financiers were ignoble because of their selfish pursuit of material gain.¹⁴

The debate over the proper role of the nobility was not particularly new in the 1750s, but it took on a different tone and fervor with a publication by the abbé Gabriel-François Coyer in January 1756—the year before the founding of the Loterie de l'École Militaire.¹⁵ In his *La noblesse commerçante*, Coyer set off a debate that spawned a pamphlet war over the nobility's role in commerce but also about the very role of nobility and even the meaning of patriotism.¹⁶ Coyer's essay responded, in part, to the marquis de Lassay. Lassay, who had died in 1738, had argued that the nobility should not be

¹³ For a discussion of Rousseau's role in this discourse, see Jay M. Smith, *Nobility Reimagined: The Patriotic Nation in Eighteenth-Century France* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2005), 79-90.

¹⁴ Ibid., 104-111. For a general discussion of venality, see William Doyle, *Venality: The Sale of Offices in Eighteenth-Century France* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996).

¹⁵ Smith, *Nobility Reimagined*, 120; for a general survey of Coyer's life, see Leonard Adams, *Coyer and the Enlightenment* (Banbury: Voltaire Foundation, 1974).

¹⁶ For a discussion on the debate over the *noblesse commerçante*, see J. Q. C. Mackrell, *The Attack on "Feudalism" in Eighteenth-Century France* (London: Routledge, 1973), 77-103; Shovlin, *Political Economy of Virtue*, 58-65; Smith, *Nobility Reimagined*, 104-142; Jay Smith, "Social Categories, the Language of Patriotism, and the Origins of the French Revolution: The Debate over *Noblesse Commerçante*," *Journal of Modern History* 72 (2000): 339-374.

allowed to engage in commerce. Being noble was more than just a social position; it also meant being a bastion of moral fortitude. That noble morality manifested itself in the nobility's selfless sacrifice to the king and *patrie* through military service. And in fact, it was that moral fiber of the nobility that gave the French army its strength and advantage over its enemies. For this reason, Lassay argued that the nobility should not be allowed to engage in commerce which was an inherently selfish pursuit and would naturally corrupt anyone who pursued it.¹⁷

Coyer objected to this idea that the nobility had a special hold on moral virtue and love of *patrie*. In his *Noblesse commerçante*, he argued that there was no moral divide between commercial activities and military service. Merchants were just as virtuous as nobles. In fact, according to Jay Smith's interpretation, Coyer redefined the whole concept of honor and virtue. Rather than those moral traits being based upon service to the king through military service, Coyer proposed that they be considered along the lines of utility to the *patrie*. He essentially accepted Mandeville's theory of private vices and public virtues. Coyer contrasted the useful merchants who engaged in commerce and thereby created wealth for the nation as a whole to the idle nobility who did nothing due to their special status. In this way, he argued that merchants were more patriotic because of their utility. The nobility would then be of more service to the nation if they engaged in commerce.¹⁸ Coyer privileged utility over status and commerce over nobility.

Coyer's essay set off a fierce debate. Among the first and most prominent critiques was the chevalier d'Arcq's *La noblesse militaire, opposée à La noblesse*

¹⁷ Smith, *Nobility Reimagined*, 107.

¹⁸ Shovlin, *Political Economy of Virtue*, 58-65; Smith, *Nobility Reimagined*, 111-120. For a discussion of Mandeville, see E. G. Hundert, *The Enlightenment's Fable: Bernard Mandeville and the Discovery of Society* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994).

commerçante: Ou le patriote français published in 1756. The chevalier d’Arcq, who happened to be the illegitimate son of Louis XIV’s illegitimate son, attacked Coyer’s notion that the nobility should actively take part in commerce. Using the language of Rousseau, d’Arcq attacked commerce more generally as breeding luxury and moral corruption through selfish pursuit of gain. It was, he argued, the nobility’s highest calling to sacrifice for the king and *patrie*. Merchants were, after all, “mere calculators, whose only goal is to enrich themselves while procuring for their fellow citizens all the things that weaken their courage...men who will do anything to increase the level of opulence, pomp, and luxury in their country and [who do] nothing to conserve its liberty.”¹⁹ Echoing Rousseau’s language, d’Arcq referred to an “idle citizen” as “useless” and “criminal” who “steals all that he consumes. The *Gentilhomme* is a citizen before being noble, and the only privilege his nobility gives him is the right to choose among the important services that the state can and must expect of him.”²⁰ Everyone, d’Arcq argued, should think of the *patrie* first and foremost and certainly before thinking of himself as commercial men did. For d’Arcq, military service was the highest ideal of devotion to the state and, as for Rousseau, was diametrically opposed to commerce and luxury. The nobility should maintain their traditional, selfless warrior status and remain far away from the new, selfish commerce.²¹ It was within this intellectual and cultural context that the École Royale Militaire was formed. The debates surrounding the new lottery in support of a military school for the impoverished nobility were thus steeped in the discourses surrounding commerce, nobility, and egoism versus patriotism.

¹⁹ Quoted in Smith, *Nobility Reimagined*, 126.

²⁰ Quoted in Smith, *Nobility Reimagined*, 122.

²¹ Blaufarb, *French Army*, 17; Shovlin, *Political Economy of Virtue*, 58-65; and Smith, *Nobility Reimagined*, 120-131.

Military Reform, the École Royale Militaire, and Casanova

These debates about luxury, commerce, nobility, service, and general national decay spilled over into questions about the French military.²² Many within the second estate, and the military in particular, felt a general sense of decay in the French military. There was a feeling of shame over the rather mediocre performance of French forces during the War of Austrian Succession. Reformers believed that military decay was simply an indication of greater decay within and throughout French society as the nobles played a smaller and smaller part in military service. There was an attempt to reassert the traditional connection between the nobility and the military. Venality, ennoblement, and money in general were thought to play too large a part in the military rather than the nobility and their virtuous character and keen skills as warriors. The chevalier d'Arcq warned that too many officer commissions had gone to moneyed men that "should have been given to the nobility."²³ And the comte de Saint-Germain, who would become war minister, felt that the financial pressures of military service pushed away too many of the poor nobility, especially during the intense and expensive wartime pressure of mid-eighteenth century. As Saint-Germain said, "all the poor nobility, destined by birth to serve and form the backbone of the army, is absolutely excluded."²⁴

The founding of the École Royale Militaire was seen as a solution to the problem of a lack of nobles in military service by increasing military opportunities for the impoverished nobility. The school was founded in 1751 to provide an entirely free military education to impoverished nobles with 500 spots allotted for these scholarship

²² The best general discussion of reform within the French military is Blaufarb, *French Army*; also, David D. Bien, "The Army in the French Enlightenment: Reform, Reaction, and Revolution," *Past and Present* 85 (1979): 68-98; and Smith, *Nobility Reimagined*, 186-216.

²³ Quoted in Blaufarb, *French Army*, 17.

²⁴ Quoted in Blaufarb, *French Army*, 17.

students. The school also allowed for a stipend which continued until the graduate reached the rank of captain—the rank upon which he was no longer responsible for the expense of his own unit. The school was strictly for the impoverished nobility who had to prove both their indigence and their nobility through at least four generations. The very idea of the school was, then, to counter the pernicious effects of commerce and moneyed interests in the military by setting conditions by which the poor nobility could rightfully assert their true role as the king's warriors.²⁵ By reasserting the role of status over money, the École Royale Militaire was to play an important role in this presumed reemergence of the French military.

The new school started out as a means of bringing the French military back into the traditional Old Regime order, yet ironically its intendant was Joseph Pâris-Duverney, one of the great financiers of the eighteenth century. One of the most important financiers to the king, Pâris-Duverney represented exactly the kind of man that the chevalier d'Arcq and military reformers wanted to keep out of the military. As intendant, Pâris-Duverney was responsible for operating the École Royale Militaire, including funding it.²⁶ By 1757, the school was under major financial strain. The school was under the patronage of the king, but with France entering into the costly Seven Years War, Pâris-Duverney desperately sought a way to improve the school's finances without directly asking the king for more resources.²⁷ Being an innovative financier, Pâris-Duverney ultimately settled on a new lottery.

²⁵ Blaufarb, *French Army*, 20-23.

²⁶ Shovlin, *Political Economy of Virtue*, 30-31 and 80-81.

²⁷ Giacomo Casanova, *History of My Life*, translated by Willard R. Trask, 12 vols. (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997), 5: 24.

Much of what we know about the origins of this lottery comes from the memoirs of Giacomo Casanova. Because Casanova's life and his conception of gambling interweave with the history of the Loterie de l'École Militaire, I will spend a fair amount of time discussing not only Casanova's role in the lottery but also the way he discusses and uses gambling within his text. Ultimately, I will argue that Casanova and his own view of the lottery, and gambling more generally, represent a vastly different conception not only of gambling but also of commerce, luxury, and what contemporaries called egoism. In his memoirs, Casanova argued fervently for a lottery, and in doing so, he stood for cultural values very different than those represented by Rousseau and d'Arcq.

There are perhaps few people from the eighteenth century who capture the imagination more than Casanova.²⁸ He was a widely celebrated itinerant "adventurer" in that all encompassing eighteenth-century expression, which implied generally a sense of rootlessness and risk taking. His memoirs recount seemingly endless stories of intrigue, libertinage, and gambling. And he was entirely comfortable recreating his own identity whenever the need presented itself—even taking his own invented title of Chevalier de Seingalt. In fact, it is that very sense of identity, or lack thereof, that is particularly interesting about Casanova in relation to commerce, luxury, and patriotism. Casanova spent most of his life traveling through Europe without rooting himself to any particular place, language, or religion. To be sure, he wrote his memoirs in French, not his native language of Italian. Casanova settled in a place for as long as he enjoyed the pleasures

²⁸ For a general discussion of Casanova, see Robert Abirached, *Casanova ou la dissipation* (Paris: Grasset, 1961); J. Rives Childs, *Casanova, a New Perspective* (New York: Paragon House, 1988); Chantal Thomas, *Casanova, un voyage libertin* (Paris: Denoël, 1985). For a discussion of Casanova as a gambler, see J. Rives Childs, "Casanova as Gambler," *Casanova Gleanings* 3 (1960): 4-14; Thomas M. Kavanagh, *Dice, Cards, Wheels: A Different History of French Culture* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2005), 85-109.

that were to be offered there or until his patrons tired of him. When either one of those things happened, he simply packed up and moved on. This rootless egoism stood in sharp contrast to Rousseau who asserted his identity by signing “Citizen of Geneva” on the title page of his 1750 text on the sciences and arts. While Rousseau and other anti-luxury moralists espoused selfless devotion to *patrie*, Casanova extolled the virtues of rootless self-indulgence.

Casanova’s willingness to selfishly reinvent himself makes his role in the founding of an institution meant to increase noble virtues quite intriguing—much like Pâris-Duverney. But his inventiveness also makes Casanova’s memoirs problematic for the historian to use. And in fact, his involvement and role in the formation of the Loterie de l’École Militaire—at least as he tells it—is up for question with evidence that both supports his story and evidence that seems to question it. It is worth noting, however, that there is no evidence that directly contradicts Casanova’s story. Casanova’s name does not appear in any of the minutes of the lottery’s council, but his name does appear on a list of receivers, albeit on rue Saint-Martin, not rue Saint-Denis as claimed by Casanova.²⁹ Having said that, I will read Casanova’s memoirs for the identity it expresses about gambling and lotteries rather than as a record of Casanova’s role in the development of the Loterie de l’École Militaire. I would argue that it reveals a great deal about both Casanova’s notions of gambling and lotteries as well as the response of those in power—or at least how Casanova portrayed their response as he imagined it would have been in 1757. Casanova was unique in the eighteenth century in that he did not simply defend lotteries, rather he positively promoted them without any sense of shame.

²⁹ Charles Samaran, *Jacques Casanova, vénitien: une vie d’aventurier au XVIIIe siècle* (Paris: Calmann-Lévy, 1914), 116-132.

Lotteries were good because they were financially effective, not because they were effectively charitable. Casanova's text is thus worthy of a thorough examination.

I would also suggest that Casanova's text and his discussion of the new lottery can be seen as representative of the group of the financial elite which in many ways stood in opposition to the moralists who opposed luxury and commerce. In particular, John Shovlin argues that there was a resurgence in anti-luxury discourse at the end of the 1740s and beginning of the 1750s and that at the center of this resurgence was the role of financiers both in French politics, particularly the court, and French society. This particular hostility, as Shovlin argues, centered around Madame de Pompadour who became Louis XV's mistress in 1745 and who had significant ties with the highest levels of French finance. In fact, her father was a financier who had dealings with the noted Pâris family. And Pompadour, before she was Pompadour, married Charles-Guillaume Lenormand d'Étiolles who inherited a position as a tax farmer. She became a protégée of the Pâris clan whose influence reached its height when she became royal mistress. With Pompadour's reputation for unprecedented power there was also a feeling that finance and its pernicious influence had also reached its height of power—to the distinct fear of many moralists.³⁰ Pompadour had a social circle which included Voltaire, an avid proponent of British commerce, and he himself was a client of the Pâris family. Another member of that circle was Jean-Nicolas de Boullongne who served as Controller General from 1757 to 1759 and whose father was a tax farmer.³¹ As Shovlin states, “Pompadour's relationship with the king might be taken as a metaphor for the ways in which financiers were, literally, in bed with the court aristocracy by the middle of the

³⁰ Shovlin, *Political Economy of Virtue*, 26-38.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 37.

eighteenth century.”³² It was exactly this Pompadour circle in which Casanova became involved, and in many ways, his text could be broadly construed as the voice of the coterie of finance at mid-century in opposition to such voices as Rousseau and d’Arcq.

Casanova arrived in Paris in January 1757—six years after the founding of the military school and at the same time that Pâris-Duverney was searching for ways to finance the school. Casanova’s story intersected with that of the Loterie de l’École Militaire through his acquaintance with the abbé de Bernis who in 1757 was Louis XV’s foreign minister. According to Casanova, Bernis brought him to a dinner party which included two important members of the Pompadour circle: Pâris-Duverney and Boullongne, the current Controller General. Casanova writes that when he met them the two men were in ardent discussion over ways to fund the École Royale Militaire “without burdening the State or embarrassing the royal treasury”—in other words, without causing financial strain or political problems. Understanding these two constraints to be both economic and political, Casanova announced that he had a plan that would be both financially beneficial, costing “only the expense of collecting it,” and be politically acceptable, since it would be provided by the nation “voluntarily.”³³ Boullongne and Pâris-Duverney assumed Casanova had a lottery in mind and announced that they were already considering a lottery plan suggested by another Italian, Giovanni Antonio Calzabigi who was secretary to the ambassador from the Two Sicilies.³⁴

The lottery had the support of Pâris-Duverney’s ally Madame de Pompadour, but there were some on the King’s Council who were reluctant to support the plan. Their concerns were not moral but financial; they feared losses. This proposed lottery was

³² Ibid., 31.

³³ Casanova, *History of My Life*, 5: 24.

³⁴ Ibid., 5:24-25, and 5: 274, n. 22.

different than the previous lotteries in France. The *trois petites loteries* functioned like a raffle. Each ticket was assigned a number, and when someone purchased that ticket, its number was then dropped into the spinning wheel, commonly referred to as the wheel of fortune. There were then a predetermined number of winning lots with the largest lots being a percentage of the total revenue taken in for a particular drawing. In other words, the winning prizes were ultimately determined by the amount of money paid by the players, so the amount paid out in winning lots could never be more than the amount taken in. The lottery proposed by Calzabigi was modeled after the Genoese lottery, which consisted of ninety numbered balls. For each drawing, five balls were selected from the wheel of fortune. Players could bet on the numbers drawn, and they could bet on one number, two, three, four, or all five. Naturally the player won more for the more numbers they correctly guessed. The concern with this Genoese-style lottery was that the amount paid out to an individual winner was a fixed ratio of the amount that that one player paid regardless of the total amount of money taken in by the whole lottery. In other words, it was possible for only one player to buy a ticket for a particular drawing, but if that player won then the lottery needed to pay the prize even though it would mean a huge loss for the lottery. Officials were concerned about the possibility of numerous players selecting all five numbers correctly, so that potentially the lottery could owe more in winning prizes than it actually took in—thus, creating a massive financial loss. The Genoese lottery was much more dynamic than the raffle-style lottery, but that dynamism carried with it an inherent and constant risk of ruin.

Casanova understood this dynamic aspect of a Genoese lottery, but rather than fear it, he claimed he embraced it. And in embracing it, he adopted a broadly

consumerist approach. Rather than minimize financial exposure, Casanova suggested that the state flaunt money to whet consumers' appetites and garner their confidence in the institution. He suggested that the Royal Council issue a decree announcing that the Royal Treasury would guarantee the lottery for up to a hundred million livres. Pâris-Duverney balked at such a large sum, but Casanova, fully immersed in the world of gambling, argued that such a measure would reassure consumers. But more than reassurance, mere talk of such large sums of money would stoke the imagination of consumers as they would undoubtedly project that money into their own hands. Casanova offered the cautious men of finance a lesson in consumer psychology. As Casanova told the great financiers, "the thing is to dazzle."³⁵ This lottery, as Casanova conceived it, would not be some cautious, risk-averse charitable enterprise; rather, it would be an aggressive, risk-seeking commercial enterprise which accepted an unabashed ethos of consumption. Casanova's model of the consumer was the gambler who was driven by the desire to win.

The state's concern for a potential loss was not at all unreasonable, since the mathematics of statistics and probability were at the time in their infancy. And lotteries did fail. Some failed from poor management and lack of profits, but others failed due to players hitting the improbable odds. The Bavarian lottery, which was Genoese style, went bankrupt in 1753 when a player won an astronomical amount that the lottery could not afford to pay.³⁶ Certainly, the Council of the École Militaire must have been aware of the collapse of the Bavarian lottery which occurred just a few years before. And even if the lottery did not suffer from catastrophic misfortune, there was always the concern

³⁵ Ibid., 5:26.

³⁶ Lorraine Daston, *Classical Probability in the Enlightenment* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988), 143.

that some unscrupulous players might find a way to manipulate the lottery in an untoward way. Indeed, no less a personage than Voltaire had made his fortune from manipulating a poorly designed lottery a few decades earlier.

The details and records of Voltaire's triumph are far from clear, but it seems to have happened as follows. With the help of a mathematician friend, La Condamine, Voltaire recognized a flaw in the Pelletier-Desforts lottery of 1729-1730. The city of Paris had recently defaulted on some of its bonds, so the lottery was held in order to reimburse at least some of the bond holders. The lottery was only open to those holding the bonds on which the city had defaulted. The holders of the bonds then had to purchase their lottery tickets in order to participate in the lottery. Each ticket had to be purchased for a thousandth of the face value of the bond, so that a holder of a bond for 1,000 livres bought a ticket for one livre, and a bond with a face value of 50,000 livres cost 50 livres. The lottery was drawn monthly and if one's ticket was drawn then the city reimbursed the ticket holder for the full value of their bond. Because every ticket was potentially worth a different amount, the lottery was drawn only until the funds were exhausted for that month. There was another twist to this lottery: the government added 500,000 livres to each month's drawing in order to show good faith. Each month the winning ticket holders would split the 500,000 livres extra money. This overlay, as modern gamblers would refer to it, meant that if one individual bought up every ticket for that month's lottery, then that individual would be guaranteed a profit of 500,000 livres. Realizing this, La Condamine and Voltaire set out to do exactly this. With the total number of bondholders being fairly limited and the number of authorized selling agents for the tickets also fairly limited, the task was not impossible. La Condamine and Voltaire seem

to have set up a syndicate of thirteen members to buy up the valueless bonds from their owners, wary of the government and its lottery. They then used the bonds to buy the lottery tickets. Of course, they were unable to buy all the bonds, but they did manage to buy the vast majority of them. By early 1730, the government became aware of the problem and ultimately changed the rules, but by that time, Voltaire's syndicate had made a fortune. Different scholars have estimated that Voltaire made a profit of between 500,000 and a million livres.³⁷

These type of failures were what he had in mind when Pâris-Duverney pointedly asked Casanova if it were not true “that at the very first drawing the King can lose an immense sum?” Pâris-Duverney spoke with the caution of a careful financier. Casanova responded with a true gambler's instinct. Using careful calculation, Casanova fully embraced this risk as acceptable, responding that “between possibility and reality there in infinity; but I admit it [that the king could lose].” Shockingly, Casanova did not merely embrace risk; he positively hoped for initial losses, arguing that, “if the King loses a great sum at the first drawing, the success of the lottery is assured. It is a misfortune to be desired.”³⁸ Making an analogy to the profitable insurance companies, relatively new in the eighteenth century, Casanova argued that purchasers of insurance did so because they saw the very real material loss when disaster happened. Because the losses were very concrete, consumers purchased insurance.³⁹ The same principle, Casanova claimed, held true for lottery tickets. He argued that an initial loss by the lottery and win for the players would bridge the gap between imagination and reality which in turn would spur their real

³⁷ For a full explanation, see Jacques Donvez, *De quoi vivait Voltaire* (Paris: Deux Rives, 1949), 37-55; the incident is also mentioned in David Bodanis, *Passionate Minds: Emilie du Chatelet, Voltaire, and the Great Love Affair of the Enlightenment* (New York: Crown Publishers, 2006), 59-60.

³⁸ Casanova, *History of My Life*, 5: 26-27.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 5: 32-34.

consumption of lottery tickets. Lotteries and insurance were similar enterprises for Casanova. They both were a matter of statistical advantage, if designed properly, but they were also both actively engaged with consumer psychology and imagination.

In his excellent chapter on Casanova in *Dice, Cards, Wheels: A Different History of French Culture*, Thomas Kavanagh argues that Casanova had no real interest in the lottery in that he never played the lottery himself. Furthermore, he argues that for Casanova the lottery was simply an impersonal game which amalgamated “its dispersed players into a statistical mass.” Kavanagh argues that Casanova found games like *pharaon* and *biribi* more interesting because they entailed more personal and intimate contact within very small groups—*pharaon* was normally played with just two players and a banker, while *biribi* consisted of small groups working together against a banker. Kavanagh reads Casanova as enjoying these games because of the polite conviviality associated with them, and the element of skill they required along with personal fortitude.⁴⁰ Indeed, Kavanagh reads Casanova as making these games, *pharaon* and *biribi*, into traditional, noble contests of personal honor and courage.

Although it may well be true that Casanova enjoyed those games more because of the polite conviviality, I think Kavanagh’s interpretation is a fundamental misunderstanding of Casanova’s representation of gambling and the lottery, more specifically. As Kavanagh explains, Casanova quite early in his gambling career realized that the way to win at *pharaon* and *biribi* was not to play the game but to be the banker. He understood that the banker always had the statistical edge, and while he may lose some nights, he would win more than he would lose. As Casanova explained: “The bettor is a fool; while the banker exercises his reason. ‘I wager,’ the banker says, ‘that

⁴⁰ Kavanagh, *Dice, Cards, Wheels*, 90.

you will not guess.’ The bettor answers, ‘I wager that I shall guess.’ Which one is the fool?”⁴¹ So while Kavanagh emphasizes the difference between Casanova’s conceptualization of the lottery and *pharaon* and *biribi*, I would argue that they were essentially the same to Casanova. Gambling, for Casanova, was about making money through understanding the consumer imaginary. The banker was selling the imagination of consumption and the bettor was buying it. Gambling was not about honor, nobility, or personal fortitude, as Kavanagh suggests; rather as Casanova promoted it, gambling was an active engagement in consumer culture, just like playing the lottery.

It was this concept of gambling and playing lotteries as commercial calculation that Casanova presented, or at least claimed to have presented, to the Council of the École Militaire—a meeting set up by Madame de Pompadour, who, he says, had long championed the idea of a lottery. But whatever his role, the Loterie de l’École Militaire was decreed into existence on October 15, 1757, and with it, Casanova became a wealthy man. He was allowed to open six lottery offices and given an annual income of 4,000 livres. He immediately sold five of the six offices for 2,000 livres each, netting 10,000 livres. He opened the sixth office on the Rue Saint-Denis where he installed a clerk to run the actual day-to-day affairs.⁴² While Casanova may have profited greatly from this new lottery, the matter of whether or not such a blatantly egotistical and consumerist lottery was appropriate to use in support of the noble Military School was still to be resolved. The gap between Casanova’s consumer and Rousseau’s patriot was yet to be bridged.

⁴¹ Casanova, *History of My Life*, 2: 205, and Kavanagh, *Dice, Cards, Wheels*, 94-95.

⁴² Casanova, *History of My Life*, 5: 32-36.

Between Casanova and Rousseau: Defending the Loterie de l'École Militaire

The Loterie de l'École Militaire sat right on top of what would seem to be an intellectual fault line. The Military School's stated goal was to train the impoverished nobility to serve the king selflessly in its traditional military role. The school thus emphasized traditional selfless sacrifice, and indeed, even shunned material considerations for greater, noble goals. The lottery was meant to serve those noble ends but its means were dichotomously opposed to those ends, because it sought to exploit those very individual and selfish goals of material gain. Consumers bought tickets because they hoped for their own gain. The divergent ends and means created an intellectual conundrum that had to be resolved.

An anonymous pamphlet published with the support of the council of the military school in 1759 tried to reconcile this intellectual tension within the Loterie de l'École Militaire between the egoistical desire for gain by consumers and the military school's ideal of nobility and civic virtue.⁴³ The pamphlet was titled significantly *Le patriote français*, borrowing from d'Arcq's title, *La noblesse militaire, opposé à La noblesse commerçante: Ou le patriote français*. There is no record of what d'Arcq himself thought of the new lottery, but in principle, the lottery went against everything for which he stood. The 1759 pamphlet's goal was to defend the lottery, but it also accepted d'Arcq's fundamental point of view that the nobility was the source of regeneration for the French military. In borrowing the title *Le patriote français*, the author attempted to reconcile the selfish egoism of lottery ticket consumers with the selfless sacrifice of the nobility. Through the consumption of lottery tickets consumers would be able to support their *patrie* by aiding the impoverished nobility regenerate the military.

⁴³ Lalan, "La Loterie de l'École Militaire," 34-35.

In defending the new Loterie de l'École Militaire, the author used language that would make both Rousseau and Casanova, and for that matter Coyer and d'Arcq, quite comfortable and uncomfortable at the same time. The pamphlet implicitly accepted the good of the school itself. There was, in fact, no defense of the school as none seemed needed. The lottery, on the other hand, was a different matter, and it stood at the center of these "patriotic observations." In defending the lottery, the author mixed the language of nobility, patriotism, liberty, equity, and good administration.

The pamphlet begins by defending lotteries as a whole since they raise money "by a means imperceptible and not onerous to any individual of public society." The means was "imperceptible" because the amount that players contributed was small relative to the totality. But in a larger sense the author implied that the "imperceptible and not onerous" referred to something beyond financial and economic scale. Lotteries were easy, the pamphlet suggested, because of each individual's freedom and liberty to choose to purchase a lottery ticket or not. It was ultimately the individual's choice whether or not to participate in the larger society that was the lottery, "as the establishment of lotteries has nothing coercive about them and each person is free to take part or not in chance." It was that freedom not to participate, however, that made lotteries difficult as well because the lottery had to please the ticket consuming public, since "the primary concern that one should have is to hold the confidence" of that public.⁴⁴ The very nature of lotteries required an alignment of interest in the very broadest sense between consumer and merchant.

⁴⁴ *Le patriote français*, (Paris, 1759), 1. "par un moyen insensible, & non onéreux à chaque individu de la société publique"; "Comme l'établissement des Loteries n'a rien de coactif, & que chacun est libre de prendre part ou non à ce hazard"; "le premier soin que l'on doit avoir, est d'y attirer la confiance."

In order to gain that public confidence, a lottery must abide by two fundamental principals according to *Le patriote français*. First, the profit of the lottery must be used in a manner “useful in itself, and in a way that is agreeable to the Public.” Second, the structure of the lottery must be such that it secures “a reasonable profit” while also giving “to the same Public hope of gain...by sacrificing little in order to win a lot.”⁴⁵ For a lottery to be successful, its profit must be used in a way to which the public agrees, and it must incorporate a sense of fairness and proportion in which players only risk inconsequential sums. “Every lottery, founded and led by these two principles, has a certain right to public confidence.”⁴⁶

The pamphlet made no defense of lotteries in principle but simply claimed that the final use of the money mitigated and cleansed the “vice and infamy of its origin.” If after all, the nation could support the various religious communities and the foundlings through lotteries then why could it not support the nobility, which was equally valuable? Indeed, engaging with the 1750s discourse of nobility and patriotism, the author placed the nobility at the center of French nation and its rejuvenation. It was after all the military school which “prepares for it [the nation] the defenders and the support of its grandeur,” and it was the nobility and their families “who have paid with their blood” for the nation.⁴⁷ It was because of the past sacrifices and spilled blood of the nobility that the lottery should fulfill the first principle of lotteries and thus “excite the zeal and confidence of the French Nation.” But it was not merely the past sacrifices that justified

⁴⁵ Ibid., 1-2. “utile en lui-même, & de nature à être agréable au Public.”; “un bénéfice raisonnable”; “à ce même Public des espérances de gain...à sacrifier peu, pour gagner beaucoup.”

⁴⁶ Ibid., 2. “Toute Loterie, fondée & dirigée sur ces deux principes, a un droit certain à la confiance publique.”

⁴⁷ Ibid., 2. “vice & l’infamie de leur origine”; “lui prépare des défenseurs & des soutiens de sa grandeur”; “qui ont versé leur sang.”

the Loterie de l'École Militaire. Rather the nation was "assuring itself of new epochs of glory" by supporting the lottery and consequently the training of the poor nobility in the art of war.⁴⁸

The pamphlet ultimately justified the means of the lottery by arguing that the end was good. But throughout the pamphlet the end was not entirely clear. It was not simply the nobility or the poor nobility that the author lauded as an estimable end. It was also not the nobility's military service to the king that was praised, as was the long intellectual tradition. Rather it was the nobility's service to the nation that was emphasized. Indeed, the Loterie de l'École Militaire "was not established directly in the name of the king, rather it is by his authorization and under his protection."⁴⁹ The king was simply an arbiter and regulator of the lottery. The king was thus not directly involved with the lottery. In fact, the public bought tickets for its own benefit of rejuvenating the nation by supporting the poor nobility. To an extent the author of the pamphlet portrayed the king as somewhat irrelevant as the lottery arose out of the will of the public and indeed the lottery and the nation became discursively inseparable. The king acted as a mere arbiter between the lottery and the public, but the public willed the lottery in order to rejuvenate the nation. In fact, the pamphlet states, one "is able to see the Loterie de l'École Royale Militaire as something analogous to the taste of the nation."⁵⁰ The entire discussion of the nobility and its sacrifice was framed in patriotic discourse, but that patriotic discourse did not center around the king but rather the nation. Significantly, it was now the nation,

⁴⁸ Ibid., 2. "exciter le zèle & la confiance de la Nation Française"; "elle s'assure de nouvelles époques de gloire."

⁴⁹ Ibid., 6. "ce n'est pas au nom du Roi immédiatement, c'est par son autorisation, & sous une protection."

⁵⁰ Ibid., 6. "la Loterie de l'École Royale Militaire pouvoit être regardée comme quelque chose analogue au goût de la Nation."

not the king, who would be supporting the national regeneration through consumption of tickets of the new lottery.

The pamphlet even used the language of enlightenment and modernity to refute those who would argue against a lottery. The author acknowledged that many people were left “in disgust at using a lottery.” There were “many demonstrations and decompositions, but little enlightenment.” Regardless, the public was the true arbiter of right and wrong and even enlightenment. For “the public however has begun to acquaint itself with it [the lottery] and to finish enlightening itself and fixing its taste.”⁵¹ Despite what moralists might say about the lottery, the public’s approval and its own enlightenment on the matter was worth more. And in fact, the pamphlet argued that this was one of the primary reasons behind the king allowing a lottery for the military school. It was because of the public’s desire and willingness to play the game that he chose a lottery rather than some other tax measure which would be “a direct and absolute burden on his people.”⁵²

The pamphlet addressed the second principle of good lotteries by discussing the question of player equity—that is, the players being paid out a reasonable amount of their money back. In fact the pamphlet’s author made the case that both equity and liberty, two of the key characteristics of the Loterie de l’École Militaire, were civilizing attributes. Many critics of the lottery had found the *ambe* and *terne* wagers particularly offensive and unfair. The first was a wager on two numbers and the latter was a wager on three numbers. Critics argued that they were particularly unfair because they were so

⁵¹ Ibid., 6. “dans le dégoût de mettre à une Loterie”; “beaucoup de démonstrations & de décompositions, mais peu de lumière”; “Le Public cependant a commencé à s’y familiariser, & pour achever d’éclairer & de fixer son goût.”

⁵² Ibid., 7. “une charge directe & absolue sur ses peuples.”

difficult to win—much more difficult than winning the *extrait* wager, which was simply guessing one number correctly. In fact, the *ambe* and *terne* “are words which at first appeared so barbarous, but are easy to civilize, however, by their definition and by the manner of carrying them out.”⁵³ There was nothing inherently uncivilized about the two wagers but rather the way in which they functioned. The pamphlet focused not on the rarity of those wagers winning but rather on the equity between the remote chances and the larger payout should it hit. While the easy *extrait* paid out fifteen times the wager, the *terne* paid out 5,200 times the wager to compensate for the more difficult wager. So what mattered for the players was this “law of equity” [*la règle de l’équité*] and that players were compensated for this rarity.⁵⁴

Le patriote français thus attempted to reconcile the problem of wealth and virtue, commerce and nobility, and egoism and selfless patriotism. And in fact, to push it even further, the pamphlet argued that the lottery was uniquely situated to do these things by its very nature as a lottery. In other words, the voluntary nature of the lottery coupled with the ends that it supported—namely, the poor nobility destined to the patriotic cause of military service—made this particular lottery especially virtuous. While individuals may pursue their own individual gain, the ultimate result was support of the *patrie*. And indeed, even the title of the pamphlet attempted to reconcile the dichotomy between the individual and the *patrie*—that is, between egoism and patriotism that so many other eighteenth-century writers seemed to use. The title refers to a singular individual in “*le patriote français*,” yet both the noun and adjective of the title refer to a larger sense of community. The noun “*patriote*” highlighted the individual acting on behalf of the

⁵³ Ibid., 8. “sont ces mots qui ont d’abord parû si barbares, & qui sont cependant aisés à civiliser par leur définition, & par la manière de les opérer.”

⁵⁴ Ibid., 8-9.

community. Just as d'Arcq used the term to highlight the nobility's selfless devotion to the *patrie* through military service, this pamphlet parallels d'Arcq's usage. Only this pamphlet's subject was not the nobility but the consumers of the Loterie de l'École Militaire. The pamphlet turned egoistical lottery ticket consumers into "French patriots." The Loterie de l'École Militaire thus stood to democratize patriotism by making consumers patriotic through their consumption of tickets. To be sure, a consumer of a ticket of the Loterie de l'École Militaire was *le patriote français*.

Establishing the Lottery: Between Royal Majesty and the Consumer

The King's Council presented the official order establishing the "Loterie en faveur de l'École Royale Militaire" on October 15, 1757. As with all royal orders, it began with a short preamble. The preamble, almost certainly written by royal officials, unsurprisingly followed the relatively formulaic standards of royal orders and was couched in the absolutist discourse of royal majesty. The preamble explained that, "the King being informed of the expenses that the establishment of his École Militaire necessarily demands, and by His Majesty's resolution in carrying to its perfection this monument of his benevolence for a Nobility which does not cease to give him testimony of its zeal," has granted the privilege of a lottery.⁵⁵ The new military school would be a place where the children of the nobility, especially the impoverished nobility, would be trained in military affairs and thus carry out their traditional role under absolutism as

⁵⁵ BN, Fonds français 22115, "Arrest du Conseil d'État du Roi, Portant établissement d'une Loterie en faveur de l'École Royale Militaire. Du 15 Octobre 1757." "Le Roi étant informé des dépenses qu'exige nécessairement l'établissement de son École militaire, dans la résolution où est Sa Majesté de porter à sa perfection ce monument de sa bienveillance pour une Noblesse qui ne cesse de lui donner des témoignages de son zèle."

warriors for the king. For their royal service, the king demonstrated his appreciation and paternal benevolence to the nobility by helping to fund this new school with the establishment of a lottery. The king was placed at the center with the lottery emanating outward from him and his authority.

The preamble of this royal order dictated that the lottery would operate for 30 consecutive years and that it would be organized under “the same principles of those established in Rome, Genoa, Venice, Milan, Naples & Vienna in Austria.” The Council of the École Militaire was responsible for the operation and administration of the lottery. Furthermore, the drawings would take place “in one of the halls of the Arsenal de Paris, in the presence of the members of the Conseil de l’École Royale Militaire.”⁵⁶ That council consisted of the War Minister, the First Intendant, the Commander of the Army, and finally the Intendant of the École Militaire, who was at the time Pâris-Duverney.⁵⁷ By standards of royal preambles, this was all pretty well within traditional Old Regime trappings, including royal officers, royal buildings, and the king’s paternal benevolence. The preamble asserts, or perhaps assumes, royal majesty as the central principle of the new lottery.

The rest of the order, however, was of a considerably different tone. The rest of the document consisted of the formal lottery plan, most likely written by Calzabigi, a professional lottery operator, and perhaps with input from Pâris-Duverney or even Casanova. Most of this lottery plan was a matter-of-fact explication of the workings of the lottery and its wagering system. This was, after all, the first Genoese-style lottery in France, and as such, it is worth going into some detail here. But the lottery, its wagering

⁵⁶ Ibid. “dans une des salles de l’Arsenal de Paris, en présence des membres du Conseil de l’École royale militaire.”

⁵⁷ Casanova, *History of My Life*, 5: 275, n. 26.

system, operating practice, and the way in which these professional lottery operators conceptualized those practices are all important in their larger implications, especially in its stark contrast to the royal preamble. While the royal preamble was centered on the king and assumed royal majesty, the professional lottery plan centered on the consumers and advocated the lottery's liberating attributes.

The clearest example of the ethos of consumer liberation can be seen in the new lottery's wagering system. This new lottery offered unprecedented consumer participation and freedom in almost every aspect of the lottery. So much so, that the authors of the lottery plan considered this consumer liberation the central defining attribute of the lottery. They argued that this new lottery would operate "always with the view of extending and varying liberty which is the principal character of this Lottery."⁵⁸ This lottery was of the Genoese model with 5 of 90 numbers selected at each drawing, with the players free to choose their own numbers and stakes, so that multiple players could win the largest prize. Again, this is in contrast to the so-called "blaque" lotteries which were drawn raffle style with the prizes determined by the number of tickets sold and players simply assigned a numbered ticket. In the Genoese lottery, the combination of players' "opinion on certain numbers that they think are lucky" with the liberty to choose those numbers made it more appealing than the rather constrained raffle lotteries, at least that is how the lottery plan understood it.⁵⁹

Though they constructed the Loterie de l'École Militaire as liberating compared with other forms of lotteries, they nonetheless took measures to guard against exploitation of this system. All lotteries were prone to fraud, but a Genoese lottery was

⁵⁸ BN, Fonds français 22115, *Arrêt du Conseil d'État du Roi...Du 15 Octobre 1757*. "toûjours dans la vûe d'étendre & de varier la liberté qui fait le caractere principal de cette Loterie"

⁵⁹ Ibid. "son opinion sur certains nombres qu'on croit heureux."

much more vulnerable than others. With a raffle lottery, each ticket drawn correlated to a single ticket held by a purchaser, which made fraud less likely. With players able to choose their own numbers, there were potentially numerous winners and so a fraudulently changed ticket would be much more difficult to detect. One of the most common forms of lottery fraud was simply to ink over a number to make it look like a different number—for example, some would try to make a five look like a six and then try to claim a prize. Image 3.1 shows a fraudulent ticket for the Loterie de l'École Militaire. The original numbers were 38, 42, and 51; but the number 42 was fraudulently made to appear as 47, and the number 51 was made to appear as 49. We know these numbers were falsified, because as a security measure against fraud the name of a saint or some other name would be attached to each number from one to ninety. Each number thus correlated to a name, since it was very difficult to tamper with a whole name. Image 3.2 is a printed list, known as a *tableau des annexes*, of the numbers and corresponding names. By cross referencing the numbers and names of the lottery ticket in Image 3.1 to the *tableau des annexes*, one can easily detect the fraud. To promote confidence, the drawings were also very public. The 90 balls with the individual numbers and names in them would then be placed in the “wheel of fortune” and five numbers would be drawn individually. This was all to happen at the Arsenal in the presence of the whole Council of the École Militaire.⁶⁰ By the end of 1758, however, the Loterie de l'École Militaire drawings were being held at the Hôtel de Ville along with all the other lotteries.⁶¹

In further contrast to the constraining raffle lotteries, this Genoese lottery would free players to play as many numbers as they would like through the new wagering

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ AN, MM 682, 15 décembre 1758. This is from the official register of the Loterie de l'École Militaire. When citing the register, I have given the date of the entry from which I received the information.

mechanisms known as the *extrait*, *ambe*, and *terne* wagers. As noted above, the *extrait* was simply a wager on one number; the *ambe* was a pick of two numbers; and the *terne* was a pick of three numbers. The *extrait* paid 15 times the player's wager, while the *ambe* paid 270 times the wager, and the more difficult to win *terne* paid 5,200 times the amount waged. The lottery plan pointed out that these payouts were the best in Europe. In Italy, the payout structure for the *extrait*, *ambe*, and *terne* were 13 1/2, 266 2/3, and 5142 7/8 times the player's wager, while in Vienna the payouts were 12, 255, and 3000 times the player's wager.⁶² This new wagering system may have been more equitable but its defining characteristic was its liberating aspect since the player "is free to place his wager by *Extrait*, by *Ambe* or by *Terne*, on six, seven, eight, ten, and an even greater number of numbers as they wish."⁶³ The players were able to wager on whatever numbers they chose and on as many numbers as they wanted. Indeed, they were free to wager on every number and combination if they so desired.

The lottery was also unique in explicitly encouraging wagering on four or five numbers. That is, players could try to guess all five numbers drawn by wagering on all the possible combinations of *extraits*, *ambes*, or *ternes* drawn. For example, if the player wanted to wager on four numbers drawn and wanted to place that wager on the *ambe*, he or she was allowed to wager on all possible combinations of the *ambe* for those four numbers. For example, a player who wanted to guess that the numbers 1, 3, 5, and 6 would be among the five numbers drawn and wanted to wager on those numbers in the form of the *ambe* could wager on all six of those combinations: 1, 3; 1, 5; 1, 6; 3, 5; 3, 6;

⁶² BN, Fonds français 22115, *Arrest du Conseil d'État du Roi...Du 15 Octobre 1757*.

⁶³ Ibid. "étant la maître de placer ses risques sur tel nombre qu'il lui plaît, les mêmes nombres heureux peuvent avoir été pris par cent & par mille personnes, & toutes jouissent alors d'un fort également favorable, proportionné à la quotité de leur mise originaire."; "est libre de placer sa mise par *Extrait*, par *Ambe* ou par *Terne*, sur six, sept, huit, dix, & plus grand nombre encore de numéros à volonté."

and 5, 6. Since the player would be playing six different combinations, he would be required to pay the equivalent of six different tickets, which would entail a minimum purchase of 72 sols. If all four of the numbers were drawn, the player would win 1,620 times his wager, since each individual *ambe* paid 270 times the stake and all six hit. If only two of the player's numbers were drawn, for example 1 and 3, then the player would win one *ambe* or 270 times his 12 sols wager. And likewise, if three of the four numbers were drawn, for example 1, 3, and 5, then the player would win three *ambes* or 270 times his 36 sols wager and so forth. The players could also wager on all four numbers for all four combinations of the *terne* as well: 1, 3, 5; 1, 3, 6; 1, 5, 6; and 3, 5, 6. Such a ticket would cost a minimum of 48 sols, since it was equivalent to four *terne* tickets. If all four numbers were drawn, the player would win 5,200 times his 48 sols wager or 12,480 livres—a huge amount of money for a wager of just 2 livres and 8 sols.⁶⁴

A player could also wager on all five numbers, and those odds and payout were even more mind boggling. A wager on all five numbers worked just the same as with four numbers. For example, if one wanted to bet on the numbers 1, 3, 5, 6, and 7, then one could bet on five *extraits*, ten *ambes*, or ten *ternes* since those were the number of combinations for each of those bets (see Table 3.1 for all of the possible combinations). Wagering on all five numbers functioned the same way as wagering on four numbers. If a player wanted to wager on all five numbers for the *terne*, then the player had to pay for the equivalent of ten tickets since there were ten possible combinations of the *terne*. And just as with a wager on four numbers, the player would be paid for each *terne* that was actually drawn, so that if only the numbers 1, 3, and 5 were drawn, the player would still be paid for one *terne* which would amount to 5,200 times the stake wagered. Of course,

⁶⁴ Ibid.

if the player picked all five numbers that were drawn, the player would win all ten combinations of the *terne* which would come out to 52,000 times the money wagered. Assuming a player wagered the minimum 12 sols per *terne* for a total of 120 sols, or 6 livres, the player would win 31,200 livres.⁶⁵

Table 3.1. The possible combinations for a player wagering on numbers 1, 3, 5, 6, and 7.⁶⁶

5 <i>Extraits</i>	10 <i>Ambes</i>	10 <i>Ternes</i>
1	1, 3	1, 3, 5
3	1, 5	1, 3, 6
5	1, 6	1, 3, 7
6	1, 7	1, 5, 6
7	3, 5	1, 5, 7
	3, 6	1, 6, 7
	3, 7	3, 5, 6
	5, 6	3, 5, 7
	5, 7	3, 6, 7
	6, 7	5, 6, 7

The players were able to choose which numbers they wanted to play, how many numbers they wanted to play, and the amount that they wanted to wager. The only stipulation was that players had to wager in increments of 12 sols with the lowest possible wager being 12 sols. There was also a maximum wager. The maximum wager

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

allowed by the lottery was 6,000 livres, 300 livres, and 150 livres for the three different types of wagers respectively. As much as the lottery may have been about consumer equity, it also limited consumers' claims on the lottery. The players had six months from the date of the drawing to claim their winnings before the ticket was null and void.⁶⁷ The imposition of a maximum wager was presumably to prevent a catastrophic loss to the lottery if one player wagered a massive amount of money on a long shot and actually won—no doubt to answer the type of concerns that Pâris-Duverney expressed to Casanova. After all, the state could easily afford a long shot hit if the wager were 150 livres but probably not if the wager were 6,000 livres. This lottery also differentiated itself by allowing players to choose their own numbers and by making the winning lots absolute rather than proportional to the amount of revenue taken in for a particular drawing. In the Loterie de l'École Militaire, each player "being the master of placing his risks on such a number as it pleases him, the same lucky numbers are able to be selected by 100 and 1000 people, and all play with an equally favorable chance, proportionately to the amount of their original wager."⁶⁸

Besides the Genoese style of this lottery there were two other features new to French lotteries. First, the plan dictated that although the lottery headquarters were to be in Paris, offices were to be set up throughout France. The Loterie de l'École Militaire was the first lottery given permission to market itself throughout the France and thus become a national lottery. Furthermore, the state granted the lottery administration permission to set up operations across France "under such form as it will be judged

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Ibid. "étant la maître de placer ses risques sur tel nombre qu'il lui plaît, les mêmes nombres heureux peuvent avoir été pris par cent & par mille personnes, & toutes jouissent alors d'un fort également favorable, proportionnellement à la quotité de leur mise originaire."; "est libre de placer sa mise par Extrait, par Ambe ou par Terne, sur six, huit, dix, & plus grand nombre encore de numéros à volonté."

necessary by the Administrators.”⁶⁹ That fairly vague statement presented the lottery administrators with a very wide prerogative and a degree of autonomous decision making unknown to previous French lotteries.

With the October 1757 royal order the Loterie de l'École Militaire was established, but the contradictions that underlay it were visible in the order itself. The preamble was rife with Old Regime absolutist discourse which sought to glorify the monarchy and assert royal majesty. The preamble asserted that the king allowed the lottery out of a sense of paternal benevolence. Ultimately, the lottery emanated outward from the king. The professional lottery plan, on the other hand, never so much as mentioned the king. The players, however, and the benefits of the new lottery to those players were mentioned repeatedly. This Genoese lottery would liberate and free those players by allowing them to choose their numbers, how many numbers, and how much to wager. It was a players' lottery meant to enhance their experience. Ultimately, the lottery emanated outward from the player. In short, the royal preamble ensconced the lottery in royal majesty, while the lottery plan unabashedly ensconced the lottery in the consumer. The particularly interesting aspect of the October 1757 order was the simultaneous contrast and convergence of these dual parts: the royal preamble and the lottery plan. The two very different parts united in one document seemed to merge these two forces of royal majesty and consumer together under the this single new lottery—albeit in a very awkward and uncomfortable manner.

⁶⁹ Ibid. “sous telle forme qu’il sera jugé nécessaire par les Administrateurs.”

Building the Lottery

The first drawing of the Loterie de l'École Militaire was held on April 18, 1758, setting off a lottery mania across Paris. According to Casanova his office alone sold 40,000 livres worth of tickets while the whole lottery had sales of 2,000,000 livres for a net profit of 600,000 livres of which 400,000 livres came from Paris. The lottery created such a buzz around the city that Casanova could go nowhere without being asked for tickets. "In all the great houses to which I went and in theater lobbies, as soon as people saw me they gave me money, asking me to stake for them as I chose and to give them the tickets, for they knew nothing about it. I carried tickets for large and small amounts in my pockets, from which I let people choose, and I returned home with my pockets full of money." For the second drawing, Casanova claims that his office did 60,000 livres worth of receipts—an increase of 50% from the first drawing.⁷⁰

The new Loterie de l'École Militaire was an instant success with the consumer public, but success with the public was different from financial success. This section will detail the lottery's struggles of building a lottery organization and bureaucracy on a scale never before known, while at the same time struggling to maintain the lottery's defining principle of consumer liberty. The lottery would ultimately become a large bureaucracy with its own multi-storied building on Rue Montmartre serving as its headquarters and employing hundreds of people throughout France, but in October 1757 it existed only as a royal decree.⁷¹ Operated by the École Militaire, all important decisions regarding the lottery were made by the Council of the school, and with Pâris-Duverney as the Intendant

⁷⁰ Casanova, *History of My Life*, 5: 35-36.

⁷¹ AN, MM 682, 11 mars 1772.

of the school, he made most of the final decisions.⁷² Discussions of the lottery by the Council of the École Militaire and decisions made regarding the lottery were recorded in an official registry reserved for the lottery business. This registry is our best, yet frustrating, source for this lottery, because it often only makes reference to *memoires* that were read at the Council and conversations that others had about the lottery without actually giving the details of those *memoires* and conversations. Nonetheless, there are many rich details revealed in the registry, and it makes clear that the lottery started off slowly and uncertainly as the bureaucracy was built from nothing. Reading the registry, one immediately senses the halting uncertainty of just how to operate such a lottery.

The first order of business was to gather the capital to run the lottery—after all, without capital the lottery could not even pay its employees. On February 2, 1758, the Council ordered that 500,000 livres be raised to pay the first winning lots and to cover the initial expenses of the lottery.⁷³ As one of the greatest and wealthiest financiers of the century, Pâris-Duverney easily supplied the 500,000 livres from his personal funds in exchange for 5 percent interest on the money.⁷⁴ After establishing liquid capital to commence operations, the Council officially named Calzabigi the elder, the professional lottery organizer whose path had intersected with Casanova and Pâris-Duverney, as the director of the lottery in February of 1758 and placed his brother, Calzabigi the younger, in charge of establishing the lottery's operations in Germany.⁷⁵ Calzabigi the elder demanded a salary of 600 livres a month and four percent of net profits that the lottery sustained, which would become an immense sum. It was also agreed that upon leaving

⁷² Ibid., décembre 1771.

⁷³ Ibid., 11 février 1758.

⁷⁴ Laulan, "La Loterie de l'École Militaire," 33.

⁷⁵ AN, MM 682, 13 février 1758.

the service of the lottery, he would maintain an annual pension of 4,000 livres per year.⁷⁶

There was also the matter of appointing receivers, inspectors, officials in charge of correspondence, and opening offices in the provinces. The lottery started off slowly with just five drawings in 1758 and then ten in 1759 before reaching what would become the standard of one a month for 1760 and onward.⁷⁷

It was not very long before the lottery ran into its first problems with the Calzabigi brothers. Because the elder had an affliction that often prevented him from working, his younger brother would take over his responsibilities from time to time.⁷⁸ It is not clear exactly what happened, but the Council quickly lost confidence in the two brothers and officially decreed on July 25, 1759 that Calzabigi the younger was no longer to have any part in the administration of the lottery.⁷⁹ It seems that Calzabigi the younger was accused of some kind of misconduct. Regardless of what happened, the younger brother asked for compensation related to his expenses traveling in Germany and for the time he spent filling his older brother's responsibilities as director.⁸⁰ The Council seemed thoroughly annoyed with Calzabigi and announced that he should just be happy to have received the 3,897 livres already paid to him.⁸¹

The elder brother was also soon pushed out, but the "affaire de M. Calzabigi" carried on for years. The Council finally cancelled the elder Calzabigi's 4,000 livres annual pension in late 1760, much to his dismay.⁸² Yet the Council continued to receive letters from him requesting its reinstatement. Among numerous letters, they received one

⁷⁶ Ibid., 29 août 1758.

⁷⁷ Lulan, "La Loterie de l'École Militaire," 34.

⁷⁸ AN, MM 682, 1 février 1759.

⁷⁹ Ibid., 25 juillet 1759.

⁸⁰ Ibid., 30 juillet 1759.

⁸¹ Ibid., 13 août 1759.

⁸² Ibid., 29 septembre 1760.

from Calzabigi's wife in November 1761, and then another from Calzabigi himself in May of 1765. This second letter was actually taken under consideration by the Council.⁸³ Calzabigi had been staying in Vienna and had arranged for some powerful friends to pressure the French ambassador there to push the issue with the French government. Regardless, his pension was never reinstated.⁸⁴ As late as April 1772, Calzabigi wrote yet another letter to the Council asking for his pension, which was again denied.⁸⁵

Calzabigi may initially have been a simple nuisance to the Council, but they quickly came to regard him as dangerous. In August 1759, the Council heard reports that Calzabigi had been spreading a proposal for a new administration of the lottery in order to discredit the lottery and its current administration.⁸⁶ In fact, the lottery considered this potential loss of public credit serious enough to take the matter to the Lieutenant General of Police who ultimately ordered both brothers banished from being within 50 leagues of Paris.⁸⁷ The matter was even taken before the king and discussed at court.⁸⁸ Unfortunately, there is nothing said about the nature of those conversations, but it does show quite clearly that the lottery took its public credit and the public's confidence in the lottery very seriously. The matters of administration were more than mere bureaucracy.

The founding of the Loterie de l'École Militaire had the misfortune of coinciding with the Seven Years War. The war was incredibly expensive and ultimately disastrous for France. Throughout the war, rumors spread that the government might go bankrupt

⁸³ Ibid., 11 janvier 1762 and 23 mai 1765.

⁸⁴ Ibid., 3 juin 1765.

⁸⁵ Ibid., 22 avril 1772.

⁸⁶ Ibid., 13 août 1759.

⁸⁷ Ibid., 16 août 1759.

⁸⁸ Ibid., 8 novembre 1759 and 24 décembre 1759.

and ultimately be unable to pay back its numerous loans.⁸⁹ Royal paper came under constant suspicion, and those suspicions spread to the lottery as well. The Council discussed this matter of growing public unease over the lottery's solvency and public concerns about continued payment of winning lots on November 22, 1759. They determined that a written response would not be suitable, but they did issue an order that all receivers should reaffirm to the public that the lottery would continue to pay all winning lots as usual.⁹⁰ The lottery thus distanced itself from the public's lack of confidence in the government. Similarly, on January 19, 1761 the Council discussed a case in which a M. Salomon and a M. Legoux had been "spreading suspicions in the public about the lottery tickets." Although the nature of the suspicions is not specified, they were considered serious enough that the Council ordered that the two men be searched for and pursued.⁹¹ Lottery administrators were determined to maintain the lottery's integrity and to prevent its authority and reputation from being undermined. Receiver error, malicious rumors of potential insolvency, and even war could not interfere with the public's faith in the lottery's ability and desire to pay its winners.

The effort to maintain its authority and reputation applied to all matters relating to the lottery. The lottery administration continually battled for control of its own organization. Because it was the receivers from whom the public bought its tickets, controlling them became a primary concern of the lottery. They were the backbone of the lottery and functioned as intermediaries between the lottery and the consumer. The receivers had three primary duties: distributing tickets, verifying payments from and to

⁸⁹ James C. Riley, *The Seven Years War and the Old Regime in France: The Economic and Financial Toll* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986), 132-133.

⁹⁰ AN, MM 682, 22 novembre 1759.

⁹¹ Ibid., 19 janvier 1761.

players, and overseeing the colporteurs to whom they supplied tickets.⁹² Perhaps most importantly, they collected the money for the lottery and were responsible for making sure that the funds got to the lottery officials.

The receivers worked in a two-tier system. There were lower level receivers who interacted directly with the consuming public on the street level, but there were also *receveurs généraux*, who oversaw the receivers of a particular province or a set number of receivers in Paris. The receivers would thus send their receipts to their *receveur générale* who would then deposit the funds into the *caisse générale*. The receivers' most important role was making sure the lottery was selling plenty of tickets. Accordingly they were paid on commission. Receivers received five percent of their net receipts, while a *receveur générale* received one percent of their net receipts from the receivers whom they oversaw.⁹³ Through this system, the receivers had a vested interest in selling as many tickets as possible, and they initially had a certain degree of autonomy.

In order to prevent mistakes as well as fraud, lottery receivers were required to maintain a registry of all tickets sold. In it, they recorded the player's name, the numbers selected, and the amount wagered. The player was then given a ticket with that same information. If a player won, he or she would bring in the ticket to claim the prize and the ticket could then be checked against the registry. There could be a problem, however, if the receiver wrote down different information on the registry and the ticket. For example, M. Mongirard, a receiver in Lyon, reported that a player showed up in his office to claim a prize, but the information in the registry and on the ticket did not correspond. The Council discussed Mongirard's case in November of 1759. They determined that

⁹² Freundlich, *Le monde de jeu à Paris (1715-1800)*, 139.

⁹³ AN, MM 682, 23 octobre 1758.

Mongirard “made an error” in recording the numbers in his registry and ordered him to pay the ticket holder, citing “the law established that the public should never suffer from the errors of the receivers.”⁹⁴ In another case, a M. Boucher, held a receipt for a *terne* wager of 36 sous on the numbers 30, 38, and 89. The receiver, a M. Pernac, had recorded the numbers 25, 45, and 79 in his registry. The records do not make clear why the Council assumed the customer was in the right, but nonetheless, the Council ordered that Boucher be paid his prize, which would have been the impressive sum of 9,360 livres.⁹⁵

The administration made a conscious effort to put the consumer first and maintain consumer confidence in the lottery. In cases of receiver error, as with Mongirard and Pernac, that meant making sure the player was paid in full and satisfied, but the Council also took steps to improve its administration by increasing uniformity and tightening control.⁹⁶ This effort was no doubt meant to improve the overall administration and profit of the lottery, but it also served to maintain the public’s confidence in the lottery. Along these lines, the King’s Council issued a decree on September 27, 1760 that ordered all receivers to register the numbers and stakes of the players in their register books before issuing the receipt to the player. The measure was done so that “the shareholders [*Actionnaires*] will be able to be fully assured of the complete uniformity of the numbers, and that the printing will not fall into any error in the issuing of the tickets.” This protective step allowed players to check their receipts against the receiver’s official registry to verify that the two were the same. This was an ostensibly small bureaucratic procedural issue, but nonetheless, it was meant to ensure complete uniformity among all receivers throughout France. Though it was a small matter, it was done with the greater

⁹⁴ Ibid., 15 novembre 1759.

⁹⁵ Ibid., 9 septembre 1760.

⁹⁶ Freundlich, *Le monde de jeu à Paris (1715-1800)*, 142-144.

goal of maintaining the all important consumer confidence. As the very beginning of the decree stated, “the administration of the lottery is set up in the way most appropriate to inspire in the shareholders [*Actionnaires*] a just and complete confidence.” Indeed, the lottery took the matter seriously enough that the failure to comply with this procedure would mean dismissal and a fine of 3,000 livres.⁹⁷

The measure of September 27, 1760 was intended to prevent mistakes, but the lottery was equally concerned about outright fraud. In early April of 1759, the Council discussed the problem of receivers taking players’ stakes, but not recording them in their registers. It had come to the Council’s attention that more than one receiver in Paris had been discovered doing this. Without an official record of the transaction, the receiver could simply pocket the wager without turning the money over to the lottery’s *Bureau general*. This would generally go undetected. The problem arose, however, when a player hit a win too big for the receiver to pay it out of his own pocket, leading to the discovery of the fraud. The Council made it known to all receivers that such fraud would be prosecuted criminally. Furthermore, the crime would be prosecuted “not only for its infidelity vis-à-vis the administration [of the lottery], but also for having compromised the security of the Public” which may have wagered money that could no longer be

⁹⁷ “Arrest du Conseil d’État du Roi, Qui ordonne que les Receveurs de la Loterie de l’Ecole Royale Militaire, seront tenus d’enregistrer sur leurs Registres les mises qui leur seront portées, avant que d’en délivrer leurs reconnoissances, afin que les Billets puissent en être expédiés. Du 27 Septembre 1760.” in *Recueil d’édits, déclarations, arrêts du conseil, réglemens et ordonnances du roi, concernant l’Hôtel de l’Ecole Royale Militaire* (Paris, 1762), 323-327. “les Actionnaires puissent se convaincre par eux-mêmes de l’entière uniformité dans les numéros, & que l’impression ne puisse tomber en aucune erreur dans l’expédition des Billets”; “l’administration de cette Loterie se fit de la manière la plus propre à inspirer aux Actionnaires une juste & entière confiance.”

collected.⁹⁸ Crime against the lottery administration was a serious matter, but no more serious than the potential crime against the consuming public.

Another criminal concern of the lottery was keeping unauthorized individuals from selling lottery tickets. On May 5, 1759, the Council dealt with the case of M. Galé who had bought some lottery tickets from a M. Berville who had been a receiver in Paris. Berville's license, however, had been revoked for unstated reasons. Galé attempted to claim his winning ticket for an *ambe* worth 27 livres and four *extraits* worth 378 livres. However, having no official standing with the lottery, Berville never registered the tickets with the lottery nor, presumably, did he turn in the wagered money to the lottery's *caisse*. Essentially Berville sold Galé tickets that had no legal value. Despite this, the Council did decide to pay Galé the full amount he had won—presumably since Galé had every reason to believe that he had indeed bought legitimate tickets. Again, the lottery decided to satisfy the ticket holder even in this case of outright fraud. In the same session, the Council decreed that any future revoked receivers who, like Berville, continued to accept wagers would be fined 1,000 écus (3,000 livres); if the suspect was not able to pay the fine, he would be physically restrained until it was paid.⁹⁹ Although this type of fraud is slightly different than the failure to register wagers discussed above, it was equally threatening to the lottery and the public's confidence in it. Ultimately the lottery had to ensure that the public felt confident in handing over its money in exchange for a slip of paper.

Outright fraud was not the only problem that the lottery administration had with the receivers. The administration took measures to ensure the receivers' fair and open

⁹⁸ AN, MM 682, 2 avril 1759. "non seulement pour son infidélité vis à vis de l'administration, mais encore pour avoir compromis la sureté du Public."

⁹⁹ Ibid., 26 mai 1759.

dealing with the lottery administration as well as the consuming public. After all, it was the receiver who, acting as a middle man, actually collected the money from the consumers on behalf of the lottery. One of the lottery's primary concerns and problems with its receivers was ensuring that the receivers were conscientious in settling their accounts in full and in a timely manner. Many receivers were tardy in delivering their collected wagers to the lottery's treasury—either out of simple tardiness or fraud. Many receivers ran up large sums of debt to the lottery.¹⁰⁰ The lottery's treasurer notified the Council on November 22, 1759 that a serious problem with receiver indebtedness had arisen and that serious measures needed to be taken against them. The Council decided that any receiver who had not settled his accounts with the lottery by the end of each drawing would have his status as receiver revoked *ipso facto*.¹⁰¹ Yet the measure was less than effective since receiver indebtedness continued to be a serious problem. In fact, indebtedness became a significant preoccupation for the Council over the next few years. Just a few weeks after decreeing the new penalties, the Council revoked five receivers for failure to settle their accounts. The receivers Cassin, Garnier, Duplessin, Daniel, and Valapin all lost their privileges on December 3, 1759.¹⁰² M. de la Geniere, a receiver in Toulon, was discovered to have been playing the lottery on his own books but without actually buying the tickets. In other words, he played the tickets for himself in hope of winning and collecting the prize, but he never actually deposited the money into his own accounts—he was essentially stealing the tickets. This led to a debt of 2,960 livres for which the Council revoked his license on May 2, 1759.¹⁰³ And on May 19, 1760, the

¹⁰⁰ Freundlich, *Le monde de jeu à Paris (1715-1800)*, 141-142.

¹⁰¹ AN, MM 682, 22 novembre 1759.

¹⁰² Ibid., 3 décembre 1759.

¹⁰³ Ibid., 2 mai 1759.

Council ordered a M. Prin to be revoked as a receiver as well.¹⁰⁴ After being *ipso facto* revoked earlier, Mlle. Garnier was formally revoked on November 10, 1760 with a total debt to the lottery of 4,865 livres.¹⁰⁵ In March of 1761, the Council discussed a receiver in Tours who owed a staggering sum of more than 10,000 livres.¹⁰⁶ In an effort to assert control over the receivers, the Council decided on October 6, 1761 to reduce their numbers in Paris from eighty to just sixty.¹⁰⁷

Efforts to rein in the receivers do seem to have had an effect. Receiver indebtedness tailed off after the first few years of the lottery, although it was always a problem. But the problem was not simply with the frontline receivers who dealt most immediately with the public on the streets of Paris and the provinces. Even higher ranking officials committed fraud. They were in many ways an even greater threat because they had access to greater sums of money and a large scandal could cause even greater damage to the lottery's public reputation. For example, the *receveur général* of Bordeaux, who was charged with overseeing all the receivers in Bordeaux, was in debt for over 9,000 livres, and making matters even worse, the Council had reason to believe that his case was a matter of "bad faith."¹⁰⁸

These cases were trivial, however, in comparison to the scope, size, and magnitude of the case of M. Le Riche. The first reference to Le Riche as an administrator of the lottery appears in June of 1765.¹⁰⁹ Then on February 19, 1771, he was, cryptically, referred to as "one of the *administrateurs généraux*" who had managed to

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., 19 mai 1760.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., 10 novembre 1760.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., 25 mars 1761.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., 6 octobre 1761.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., 9 juin 1761.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., 17 juin 1765.

“escape.”¹¹⁰ The Council discussed the matter at greater length on March 5, 1771. Le Riche’s fraud first became apparent when M. du Pont—by then the Intendant of the École Militaire and thus head of the Council with oversight of the lottery—noticed that a Mlle. David, a receiver in Orléans, and several other receivers had fallen behind in their payments to Paris. Upon questioning, Mlle. David claimed to have dutifully sent in her balances and owed nothing. After receiving David’s statement, du Pont learned of Le Riche’s flight. Among Le Riche’s duties was the oversight of numerous receivers, one of whom was David. Du Pont put two and two together and realized that Le Riche had embezzled David’s payments while recording that she was, falsely, late in payment. When Le Riche heard that du Pont was looking into the matter, he must have realized that he would soon be discovered and took flight.¹¹¹

Unfortunately for the lottery, the revelation of Le Riche’s embezzlement of Mlle. David’s payments would only be the beginning of what would become the largest individual case of fraud that the Loterie de l’École Militaire would ever endure. As officials investigated further, it became clear that the fraud was much wider and deeper than they had anticipated. On May 28, 1771, the Council received a report from the lottery administrators that Le Riche had embezzled funds from eighteen different receivers across France. The amounts varied from just 25 livres from Boulanger in Roye to 3,200 livres embezzled from Paqué in Valenciennes. Le Riche, by the way, had embezzled 269 livres from David. The total funds embezzled from those eighteen came to 9,030 livres.¹¹² The Council spent a significant amount of time over the next two years trying to sort through Le Riche’s fraud as more cases surfaced. They discovered in

¹¹⁰ Ibid., 19 février 1771.

¹¹¹ Ibid., 5 mars 1771.

¹¹² Ibid., 28 mai 1771.

July that Le Riche had embezzled 363 livres from Poura in Lyon.¹¹³ Then in August, the case came to light of Carlier in Guise who had been defrauded of 123 livres.¹¹⁴ And in December, the lottery looked into the debt of a Mlle. Monfils, receiver in Joigny, who had an outstanding debt, according to the lottery's books, of 141 livres. But Monfils protested that she had sent Le Riche two "*maids du vin*" as payment of the debt. The barter between Monfils and Le Riche went against the protocol of the lottery's standardizing efforts, but the administrators decided to consider it "a private matter between her and him." The administrators finally determined that Monfils had "suffered from the *infidélité* of her superior" and that she was not liable for the 141 livres.¹¹⁵ There would be a few other cases that popped up over the next couple of years before Le Riche's name finally disappeared from the lottery's records. It is not clear what happened to Le Riche. There are no records or mention of him having been arrested, questioned, or punished in any way. All indications are that he simply vanished with the embezzled money.

About this same time, there was also an important administrative change in the way the lottery operated. It is not clear what role the Le Riche matter played in it, but the Council decided to grant the *administrateurs généraux* greater autonomy over the lottery administration. The lottery administrators wrote a *mémoire* to the Council arguing that the lottery office had too many employees who owed their positions to powerful friends rather than merit: "that of little aptitude and inexperience of some, of ill will and even ineptitude of some others, has resulted in a dangerous lack of subordination in the promptness and exactitude of operations [of the lottery]." In short, the lottery offices

¹¹³ Ibid., 2 juillet 1771.

¹¹⁴ Ibid., 6 août 1771.

¹¹⁵ Ibid., 24 décembre 1771.

were filled with too many appointees of powerful individuals and not enough professional employees. The administrators asked for the ability to hire and fire all employees as they saw fit—a power previously held only by the Council itself. The Council noted that the administrators had for quite some time shown their competence and good-will in all of the lottery's affairs. Thus, the Council granted that, “the *administrateurs généraux* will exercise in common and in concert the power that is given to them to revoke employees of the *Bureau général* who have caused dissatisfaction and [also granting the power] to replace them when circumstances demand it...without informing the *intendant de l'hôtel* of the reasons for which they acted.”¹¹⁶ The administrators were clearly attempting to exercise greater control over the lottery by themselves and also by the professional bureaucrats who, they hoped, would fill the lottery bureaucracy. The lottery was moving toward a commercial enterprise and away from a privileged Old Regime corporation.

For all the efforts the lottery made to gain greater control over the organization, it was not merely a heartless bureaucracy. In fact, while the lottery instituted new business practices and encouraged consumers to participate in the increasingly consumerist culture, the lottery often dealt with its loyal and competent employees in as caring and as charitable a way as possible. In July of 1770, the wife of a lottery employee named Sauvage wrote to the Council to explain that both her husband and her eldest son had fallen ill—her son was so ill that he had been taken to the Hôtel Dieu. Due to their

¹¹⁶ Ibid., 3 décembre 1771. “Que du peu d’aptitude et de l’inexpérience des uns, de la mauvaise volonté et de l’ineptie même de quelques autres, il est résulté un défaut de subordination nuisible à la célérité et à l’exactitude des opérations”; “les administrateurs généraux exerceront en commun et de concert, le pouvoir qu’il leur donne de révoquer les employés du Bureau général dont ils auront quelque sujet de mécontentement et de les remplacer de même quand les Circonstances l’exigeront...sans rendre compte à l’intendant de l’hôtel des motifs qui les y auront déterminés.”

combined illnesses, the family had become indigent and she asked for any aid that they could provide. The Council gave her a relief payment of 100 livres.¹¹⁷ In March of 1773, the Council received a *mémoire* from a M. Laujorrois about his son-in-law Thomas who had served as a receiver in Langres. The Council's registry noted that Thomas had served the lottery for "eight years with much zeal, intelligence, and exactitude, but that his mental illness [*le dérangement de sa tête*] toward the end of 1771 caused disarray in his dealings. He was obliged to give up his post in March of 1772." It was then that it was discovered that he owed the lottery 2,565 livres. Thomas' father-in-law actually paid off 2,195 livres of the debt, which left a debt of 369 livres. Laujorrois explained that the remaining debt could only be paid by liquidating all of Thomas' remaining assets. Laujorrois pleaded with the Council not to take such a measure because Thomas' children depended upon these assets. The Council decided that being "equally satisfied with the honesty of the behavior of M. Laujorrois and of the management of M. Thomas before his unfortunate accident; and furthermore touched by the sad situation of the children of this former receiver," the children would be granted as an act of charity, an amount of 369 livres—thus relieving them of the debt.¹¹⁸ The next month the Council also granted money to a M. Signoret, a commissioner at the *Bureau général*, who had previously been employed as a lottery inspector, which required him to travel throughout France. He had to return to Paris due to his wife's illness and eventual death. In his petition to the Council, Signoret claimed that the strain of having two children along with

¹¹⁷ Ibid., 9 juillet 1770.

¹¹⁸ Ibid., 10 mars 1773. "huit ans, avec beaucoup de zèle, d'intelligence et d'exactitude; mais que le dérangement de sa tête, vers la fin de 1771, ayant occasionné du désordre dans ses affaires, il a été obligé d'abandonner sa recette au mois de mars 1772."; "également satisfait de l'honnêteté des procédés du M. Laujorrois, et de la gestion du M. Thomas, avant son malheureux accident; Touché d'ailleurs de la triste situation des enfants de cet ancien Receveur."

his wife's death made it impossible for him to meet his responsibilities and he appealed to the Council for assistance. The *administrateurs généraux* confirmed to the Council that "Signoret had demonstrated great *fidélité* and rendered by his conduct, his capacity, his activity, and his zeal the most advantageous evidence of it." They granted him, *à titre de gratification extraordinaire*, 300 livres.¹¹⁹

These many efforts to control the lottery were aimed at maintaining public confidence. There were other efforts to satisfy consumers as well. Perhaps most notably, the Council decided to reduce the minimum stakes in order to appeal to a larger consumer public and increase the overall ease of playing the lottery. On August 25, 1759, the King's Council ordered that the minimum stakes be reduced to increments of three sous. This new minimum only applied, however, to the *ambes* and *ternes*, while the minimum and increments for an *extrait* were still set at twelve sous. The order stated explicitly that the measure was taken "in order to facilitate the public by all the means possible in taking part in this lottery through the greatest number of opportunities."¹²⁰ It may very well be that this reform was meant to increase the public's ability to play the lottery, but it was also targeted at the most profitable wagers for the lottery: the *ambe* and *terne*. In addition, the measure had the amusing side effect of overloading the lottery's treasury with small denomination coins.¹²¹ This became such a problem that in December of 1774 the *caissier général* wrote to the Intendant of the École Militaire that the treasury

¹¹⁹ Ibid., 7 avril 1773. "la fidelité de l'exposé du M. Signoret, et rendent de sa conduite, de sa capacité, de son activité et de son zèle des témoignages avantageux."

¹²⁰ "Arrest du Conseil d'Etat du Roi, Qui ordonne aux Administrateurs de la Loterie de l'Ecole Royale Militaire, de recevoir les mises de trois & de six sols, pourvu toutefois que lesdites mises ne portent que sur les Ambes & les Ternes; les moindres mises par Extrait devant toujours demeurer à douze sols." in *Recueil d'édits, déclarations, arrêts du conseil, réglemens et ordonnances du roi, concernant l'Hôtel de l'Ecole Royale Militaire*, 321-322. "pour faciliter d'autant plus au public les moyens de s'intéresser à cette Loterie pour un plus grand nombre de chances."

¹²¹ Laulan, "La Loterie de l'École Militaire," 34.

had sacks full of one and two sous coins worth 34,000 livres—literally hundreds of thousands of coins. The Council ultimately authorized the sale of the coins to a merchant at 98.5% of face value just to unload them.¹²²

The Loterie de l'École Militaire had another curiosity worth mentioning: providing dowries for poor girls. Beginning in 1759, the lottery attached the name of one girl to a ball in the lottery's wheel of fortune. The girl had to be at least fourteen years old, and if the ball with her name was drawn, she received the right to a 200 livres dowry to be paid upon her marriage. The extant records of the lottery do not make clear the intent of this measure, but Robert Laulan is probably right in suggesting that "it was a means of rendering the lottery popular and of giving it a virtuous appearance."¹²³ Such a token act of charity would have linked this new lottery with the tradition of charitable lotteries, thus providing one more means of encouragement to those who needed to see a moral purpose to their wagers.

The arrangement did not go exactly as planned, however. By 1772, according to Laulan's figures, 835 girls had each won a dowry of 200 livres, but only 447 had actually married. The dowries of the other 388 girls remained unclaimed. The lottery determined that some of the unmarried girls had died before they were able to find a marriage partner, whereas others were simply too young at fourteen to find a spouse, yet others were too old since there was no maximum age to qualify for the prize. The lottery thus set new requirements with the minimum age of seventeen and the maximum age of thirty. The lottery also required that the girls provide baptismal records to verify their age to

¹²² AN, MM 682, 20 décembre 1774.

¹²³ Laulan, "La Loterie de l'École Militaire," 34.

prevent fraud.¹²⁴ At the same time, the new measures were intended to assure the maximum success and the highest possible rate of marriage for those who did win a dowry.

Ending the Lottery

After nearly twenty years of experience and hard-won success, the Loterie de l'École Militaire came to an end by a royal decree issued on June 30, 1776, which created a new lottery under the name of the Loterie Royale de France. With the formation of the Royal Lottery and the suppression of all others, including the Loterie de l'École Militaire, the government made provisions for the foundations supported by those now suppressed lotteries to receive an indemnity from the revenues of the new Royal Lottery.¹²⁵ In the case of the École Militaire, the lottery had become its prime source of income. In fact, in 1774 the École Militaire had total revenues from various sources of 3,673,985 livres. Of that amount, 2,669,700 livres came from its lottery—an astounding 73%. With its formation, the Royal Lottery was to pay the École Militaire an annual indemnity of 2,000,000 livres until 1787—the year the Loterie de l'École Militaire was set to expire.¹²⁶

The transition between the two lotteries was not entirely free of tension. The Royal Lottery used the lessons of the Loterie de l'École Militaire and more or less modeled itself after it, but it did not expropriate the old lottery. As far as the Council of

¹²⁴ Ibid., 34.

¹²⁵ BN, Fonds français 22115, *Arrest du Conseil d'État du Roi...Création d'une nouvelle Loterie sous le nom de Loterie Royale de France, dont le premier Tirage sera fait le 1er Septembre prochain.*

¹²⁶ Laulan, "La Loterie de l'École Militaire," 37.

the École Militaire was concerned, its lottery and all of its possessions were the property of the school and should be used for its benefit. The new administrators of the Royal Lottery had other ideas, and it was in that vein that they requested in July of 1777 that all of the remaining items at the main office of the Loterie de l'École Militaire be turned over to the Royal Lottery for its own use. The Council noted that its administrators “refused, with reason...to deliver to them any of the items.”¹²⁷

Though there was some tension, there was also undoubtedly much crossover of know-how. The Loterie de l'École Militaire was after all the first national lottery that Europe had ever known. It was a large bureaucracy with hundreds of employees experienced in the operation of such a lottery—some with nearly twenty years experience. It is impossible to say how many employees of the one joined the other, but there is reference to at least one employee who joined the Royal Lottery.¹²⁸ And although there was some tension about giving items to the Royal Lottery, the Council of the École Militaire did in fact order many of its lottery's supplies to be sold to the Royal Lottery with the proceeds to benefit the École Militaire. In February of 1777, the lottery's register noted that it had asked for 7,039 livres for those supplies.¹²⁹

The Loterie de l'École Militaire ended in 1776 but there were many years of tying up loose ends ahead, including taking care of its former loyal employees with retirement pensions.¹³⁰ There were also many dowries that were still unclaimed. In September of 1778, the lottery administrators informed the Council that there were still 304 dowries

¹²⁷ AN, MM 682, 16 juillet 1777. “refusent, avec raison...de lui délivrer aucuns effets.”

¹²⁸ Ibid., 2 septembre 1778.

¹²⁹ Ibid., 5 février 1777.

¹³⁰ Ibid., 4 novembre 1778.

unclaimed, for a financial obligation of 60,800 livres.¹³¹ The lottery was never able to keep track effectively of all of the dowries, and undoubtedly many of the girls who had won them had died and would never claim them. Nonetheless, many women did come forward to claim their dowries in the following years, and the École Militaire dutifully paid each of them. In fact, the last entry for the lottery register is on September 12, 1785 in which the Council awarded a 200 livres dowry to a Catherine Gombert for a drawing as far back as February 5, 1767.¹³² Among other loose ends was the attempt to recover old debts owed to the lottery by receivers. But the administrators noted that “it was absolutely impossible to finish the matter of the old debts of the receivers because the period of arrangement for the payment is for some so long ago.”¹³³

The Loterie de l'École Militaire may have been over but it continued to cast a long shadow. Under the *trois petites loteries*, the smaller permanent lotteries were strictly charitable in an indisputable way. That is, they helped support foundlings, religious organizations, and churches—traditional Christian charitable causes undertaken by the Church. As it was conceived by its founders and within the actual decree that gave rise to it, the École Militaire's lottery was still within that charitable tradition, yet it expanded that tradition by including a new cause for which lotteries had never been used before. The lottery had a greater purpose of aiding the impoverished nobility which, in turn, would regenerate the nation. The lottery also conflated the lottery and the state. With a name like the Loterie des Enfants Trouvés, there was no confusion over what cause the lottery supported. A ticket consumer knew that his wager would help support

¹³¹ Ibid., 30 septembre 1778.

¹³² Ibid., 12 septembre 1785.

¹³³ Ibid., 30 septembre 1778. “il leur a été absolument impossible de terminer les anciens debets des Receivers, parce que les époques des arrangements pour le payement, sont pour les uns fort éloignés.”

the Foundling Hospital. But the Loterie de l'École Royale Militaire, was discursively much more complicated. The very use of the word "royale" in its official title made it quite clear to everyone that the lottery was affiliated with the official apparatus of the state. And of course, the primary function of the École Militaire itself was to train young officers to serve in the king's military. Like many Old Regime corporations, the École Militaire operated fairly independently, but it was nonetheless a part and parcel of the French state. The lottery was thus important in confusing the boundaries of the French lottery system—neither strictly charitable nor strictly within the state. It thus served as something of an intermediary between the *trois petites loteries* and the Loterie Royale de France. It was in many ways a critical turning point in the history of the French lottery system.

The Loterie de l'École Militaire was also important for introducing the Genoese lottery to France. The adoption of the Genoese-style lottery reveals the state's growing sense of comfort with the process of lottery gambling and the mathematical probability behind it, but it also reveals something important about the state's growing involvement within the expanding and developing lottery marketplace. Under the *trois petites loteries*, the state simply regulated the lotteries. The Loterie de l'École Militaire was an actively managed lottery that also had an active marketing system to spur consumption of lottery tickets by the consuming public. Indeed, part of the appeal of the Genoese-style lottery was the breath-taking amount of potential wins. By adopting the Genoese lottery, the École Militaire was self-consciously stoking the consuming imagination of players. Even the very plan of the lottery marketed itself as superior to those in Italy and Vienna based upon its payout structure. And the receivers themselves were ultimately paid at 5% of

their sales—which encouraged them to sell as many tickets as possible. And as I have shown, the lottery administrators were constantly aware of consumer attitudes toward the lottery, whether of the public’s confidence at getting paid during the Seven Years War or making certain that players were paid despite a receiver’s error. The Loterie de l’École Militaire self-consciously marketed itself to a consuming public.

Though the lottery actively marketed itself to the consumer public, it did not see itself as being within an adversarial relationship. In fact, quite to the contrary was true. The Loterie de l’École Militaire represents an interesting moment in which there was a synergy between commerce and the new emergent political culture. The lottery actively marketed its tickets and thus took place in the commercial marketplace. Yet the lottery also marketed itself as a bastion of free choice and liberty. Players were free to choose which numbers they wanted to play and how much they wanted to wager. To be sure, the plan stated explicitly that the lottery operated “always with the view of extending and varying liberty which is the principal character of this Lottery.” According to the lottery, liberty was the very essence of the lottery. By offering the consumers as many choices as possible within the lottery market, the lottery was working to expand liberty within the commercial sphere. The Loterie de l’École Militaire was thus an Old Regime institution operating a very commercial organization under the principles of liberty. Unlike the *trois petites loteries*, it felt less need to justify itself as a paternalistic and Christian institution of charity. It addressed its consumers not as charitable givers but rather as consumers within the marketplace making free decisions. At the same time, it appealed to those consumers in three different but connected ways: as selfish profit seekers, patriots, and as sentimental beings who cared for poor nobles and poor virgins. This was also the very

same lottery that the state would suppress in order to build its own Royal Lottery, which was organized after the model provided by the Loterie de l'École Militaire. The French lottery system was moving further away from the limited lotteries that benefited charity and much closer to a state lottery to provide for general budgetary needs. The Loterie de l'École Militaire played a crucial transitional role in legitimating the lotteries and their expanded mission.

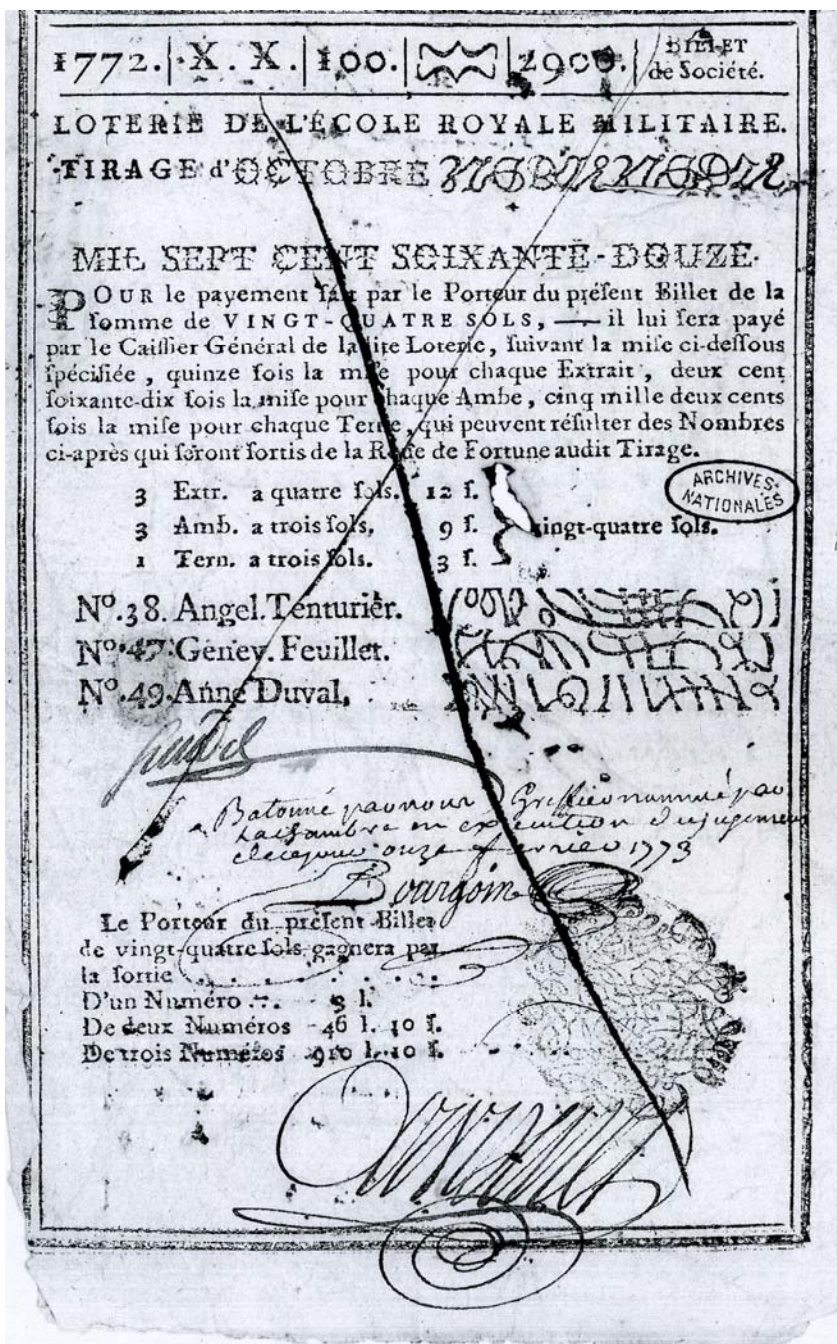


Image 3.1: Falsified lottery ticket for the October 1772 drawing of the Loterie de l'École Royale Militaire.

[illegible]

Les Nombres qui ont été tirés de la Roue de Fortune au tirage précédent, sont marqués par un chiffre entre deux Parenthèses, dans l'ordre qu'ils sont sortis.

La Loterie paye pour un Lot d'*Extrait* 11 fois la Mife, pour un Lot d'*Amble* 270 fois la Mife, pour un Lot de *Terre* 1200 fois la Mife.

Le Public doit être suffisamment prévenu que les noms annexés aux 90. Nombres, dont sont

composées les première, troisième & cinquième Colonnes de cette Lette, leur seront toujours annexés comme Devises. Mais pour ne lui rien laisser à désirer, on a formé les deuxième, quatrième & sixième Colonnes qui indiquent les Noms des Filles qui gagnent les Dots de too livres par la sortie des Nombres auxquels ils sont annexés.

Comme les Arabiques n'ont pu contenir plusieurs Noms de Baptêmes, on a été forcé de sup

primer les seconds, & même d'abrèger ceux qui demandoient trop d'étendue, ainsi qu'on pourroit le remarquer ci-dessus.

Toutes les Filles, dont les Nombres seront foris de la Roue de Fortune, rapporteront Incontinentement, au Bureau Général, leur Billet d'Année pour y être ajouté l'ordre du payement des 200 liv. qui, néanmoins, ne leur sera fait par la Caïlle générale de la Lorette, que fur la représentation du Certificat de célébration de Mariage. Celles qui n'ont pas fourni leur Extrait de Matrimoine, ou qui n'ont pas été mariées, ne pourront pas se présenter au Bureau Général, et ne pourront pas non plus se faire inscrire au Bureau de la Lorette, sans avoir obtenu d'abord leur Extrait de Matrimoine, ou leur Certificat de célébration de mariage.

naires, & les Certificats de célébration de mariage.

Chapter 4:

The Royal Lottery and the Apotheosis of the Consuming Public

This chapter examines the Loterie Royale de France from its founding in 1776 through the end of the Old Regime in 1789. The Royal Lottery was founded almost twenty years after the Loterie de l'École Militaire. It is tempting to see the history of the lotteries as a linear and chronological progression from the intermittent lotteries of the seventeenth century to the permanent charitable lotteries at the beginning of the eighteenth century. And it is tempting to see the Loterie de l'École Militaire in 1757 as an outgrowth of those charitable lotteries, while seeing the Royal Lottery as an extension of the Loterie de l'École Militaire. This is particularly tempting when one considers the financial and fiscal history of the monarchy from the time of Louis XIV to the French Revolution. That roughly 150-year period was one of costly warfare with interludes of peace. Those wars led to huge budget deficits and a great deal of political tension regarding public finance. In short, the cash strapped monarchy was constantly in search of new revenue, and the development and expansion of the French lottery system seems like a normal progression under those circumstances. But as was the case with the other lotteries, the Royal Lottery was built not on a concrete foundation of consensus, rather it was built over a fault line of tension and dispute. In this case it was over the fault line of

competing political ideas of public finance. This chapter will contextualize the Royal Lottery within the fluid political situation that characterized the transfer of power from Louis XV to Louis XVI, and it will examine the way that the lottery's proponents represented it within this political context. It will also seek to delimit, as much as possible, the actual functioning of the lottery and examine just how successful it was.

The Royal Lottery must be understood within the context of the political transfer that took place between Louis XV and Louis XVI. Although early in his reign Louis XV had been so popular that he was known as Louis "the Beloved," the end of his reign was characterized by political turmoil, especially the politics of public finance. Ending in 1763, the Seven Years War had been particularly disastrous for French finances. It put a heavy debt load on the monarchy that led to correspondingly burdensome interest payments, which the monarchy struggled to pay.¹ As the crown attempted to extract more from existing taxes as well as levy altogether new taxes, the Parlement of Paris, charged with registering those taxes, increasingly asserted its political voice in opposition to the monarchy, particularly concerning proposed peacetime taxation measures. This political impasse ultimately led to Bertin's ouster as Controller General in 1763. The gridlock between the parlements and the monarchy ended with the Maupou "Revolution" in which the Paris Parlement was banished from 1770 to 1774 so that the monarchy and his ministers could institute their fiscal reforms without the institutional political opposition of the Parlement of Paris. In that period, the king's finance minister, abbé Terray, brought about a partial bankruptcy by unilaterally setting new terms on old debt, which was, of course, favorable to the monarchy. Terray also effected new taxes, which

¹ For the overall impact of the Seven Years' War on the French economy and finances, see James C. Riley, *The Seven Years War and the Old Regime in France: The Economic and Financial Toll* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986).

now had no official political opposition without the Parlement of Paris. The final four years of Louis XV's reign were thus filled with accusations of arbitrary action and despotism as the king's ministers acted with seemingly no institutional checks on their power.² These charges were levied especially against reforms of taxation and public finance, and in many ways those two things became politically synonymous with coercion and despotism.

The death of the by then not-so-loved Louis "the Beloved" in 1774 and the accession of Louis XVI to the throne brought new hope to France after years of political wrangling. Louis XVI's political options seemed wide open yet limited at the same time by the political history of his predecessor's reign. The young new king could have maintained Louis XV's unpopular attempts to run roughshod over the Parlement of Paris. He could have continued his predecessor's efforts to consolidate political power within the institution of the monarchy in order to effect broad fiscal, administrative, and institutional reforms. That track would have meant more taxes brought about by arbitrary measures without constitutional sanction—at least, that is almost certainly how the monarchy's opponents would have labeled it. The cost of such steps would most likely have been the loss of public support, which Louis XVI was keen to win.³ Or the monarch could simply recall the Parlement of Paris, which was popular in the court of public opinion, and work within the constraints of the Old Regime which had proved so ineffective in the past.

This chapter will examine the Royal Lottery as an institution of public finance within this context of political dispute at the beginning of Louis XVI's reign. It will also

² Colin Jones, *The Great Nation: France from Louis XV to Napoleon, 1715-99* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002), 271-292.

³ John Hardman, *Louis XVI* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993), 35-36.

seek to outline the lottery as an institution and examine how successful it was. One of the primary questions of this chapter will be to ask how the Royal Lottery fits within the political context of this transition of power. With the lottery founded only two years into the new monarch's reign, what does it tell us about the politics of the beginning of the reign of Louis XVI? Specifically, how was the Royal Lottery positioned within the hotly contested political discourse of the time? And to what extent did it mark a fundamental political shift? In short, what were the political implications of the Royal Lottery?

Turgot, Necker, and Public Finance

Louis XVI came to power very much aware of how much public opinion had turned against his grandfather, and by all accounts, he sincerely wanted to win the support of the public. He took a serious step toward attaining that popular goodwill by ending the banishment of the Paris Parlement and recalling it to Paris upon his ascension to power in 1774.⁴ Louis XVI may have come to power with good intentions, but the serious financial problems facing him were just as great as they were for his predecessor. He and his ministers were determined to win over public opinion and avoid charges of arbitrary despotism, but matters of public finance would continue to interfere with their attempts at goodwill. In fact, in many ways public finance would become even more politically divisive.

Public finance was as much a political matter as it was fiscal. As such, it stood on a political and economic fault line that threatened political stability. This fault line can be seen through the rivalry of two men: Anne-Robert-Jacques Turgot and Jacques Necker.

⁴ Hardman, *Louis XVI*, 27-31.

Both men served as the head of French finances for Louis XVI. Turgot was Controller General from August 1774 to May 1776, and Necker held the same position from October 1776 until May 1781—although as a foreign-born Protestant, Necker held the title of Director General because he was barred from the position of Controller General.⁵ Both men recognized the need to reinvigorate French finances, and both could be called reformers with an equal degree of validity. Nonetheless, the reforms they desired and their notions of public finance were very different. Turgot was one of the most noted French economists of the century, while Necker was one of the most noted bankers of the century and an intimate of European financiers. The distinction between their respective approaches might be called the difference between economic reform and financial reform.

Turgot and Necker were thus charged with the difficult and unenviable task of meeting the growing fiscal challenges without being accused of despotism. This was a difficult balancing act, to be sure, yet one that the new monarch's first finance minister, Turgot, was intent on achieving. Turgot began his reign as Controller General with a declaration of three principles, all of which Louis XVI accepted: no new taxes, no new borrowing, and no bankruptcy.⁶ Turgot's solution rested on economic reforms, which he hoped would lead to economic growth and consequently an increase in tax revenue. An avid proponent of physiocracy, Turgot saw agriculture as the real source of economic wealth and advocated reforms to improve agricultural production.⁷ He pushed for

⁵ François J. Bayard, Joël Félix, and Philippe Hamon, *Dictionnaire des surintendants et contrôleurs généraux des finances du XVI^e siècle à la Révolution française de 1789* (Paris, 2000), 175-179 and 183-188.

⁶ Jones, *Great Nation*, 295.

⁷ Steven L. Kaplan, *Bread, Politics and Political Economy in the Reign of Louis XV* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1976), 111-125; Michael Kwass, *Privilege and the Politics of Taxation in Eighteenth-Century France: Liberté, Égalité, Fiscalité* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 230-239; John

economic liberalization, particularly the freeing of the grain trade which led to the widespread popular unrest in 1774 known as the Flour War. Needless to say, what popularity Turgot may have had quickly evaporated as his economic policies led to a near rebellion as people feared rising bread prices and bread shortages.⁸ Turgot's popularity and power quickly faded, but one last point is worth noting here. As a physiocrat, Turgot deeply distrusted financiers, whom he saw as mere money changers rather than truly productive. As such, Turgot's proposed reforms and attitudes toward public finance were meant to lessen the monarchy's reliance on financiers and thus their political influence, which had been pretty substantial under Louis XV.⁹ Rather than borrow money from financiers, Turgot sought to improve the French economy and increase tax collection.

Turgot's short time as Controller General was a political disaster. Having won nothing in the tribunal of public opinion save for public opprobrium, he was ousted from his position at the head of French public finance in May 1776. Turgot's fall represented the rejection of Turgot individually, but it was also a rejection of his ideas about public finance and economic reform. His successor was Jean-Étienne Bernard Clugny de Nuits whose short reign as Controller General lasted only a few months, from May to October 1776, when he died in office. While short, Clugny's term was nonetheless an important turning point in French public finance. Clugny's administration was very much a reaction to the economic reforms of Turgot, and he immediately suspended all of them.¹⁰

Clugny represented a return to the borrowing of Louis XV's reign as well as a return to

Shovlin, *The Political Economy of Virtue: Luxury, Patriotism, and the Origins of the French Revolution* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2006), 102-113; also see Elisabeth Fox-Genovese, *The Origins of Physiocracy: Economic Revolution and Social Order in Eighteenth-Century France* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1976).

⁸ Cynthia A. Bouton, *The Flour War: Gender, Class, and Community in Late Ancien Régime French Society* (University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1993).

⁹ Shovlin, *Political Economy of Virtue*, 138-144.

¹⁰ Bayard, *Dictionnaire des surintendants et contrôleurs généraux des finances*, 179-181.

the prominence of men of finance. It also meant the expansion of the French lottery system. It was under Clugny that the Royal Lottery was founded. According to one account, the new lottery almost wiped away the deficit of nearly 10 million livres that Clugny had inherited from Turgot.¹¹ Had it not been for the American War, the lottery might very well have closed the budget deficit altogether.

The Royal Lottery was created much to the chagrin of Turgot and his supporters. While in office, Turgot had rejected the proposed lottery.¹² According to his friends and confidants, Turgot despised the Royal Lottery as much as anyone. A close confidant of Turgot, Pierre-Samuel Dupont de Nemours claimed that Turgot thought the Royal Lottery “corrupted morals and destroyed the fortunes of the citizens.”¹³ And Condorcet, another friend of Turgot, claimed that Turgot opposed the lottery as nothing more than a matter of money exchange and speculation. Rather than being based on land which had real economic value, the lottery was based “in the ruses of speculation.”¹⁴

If Clugny’s policies were simply a reaction to Turgot, Necker represented the embracing and apotheosis of finance. Clugny may have been responsible for the creation of the Royal Lottery, but Necker became the person most closely associated with it. As one contemporary noted, Turgot rejected the Royal Lottery; Clugny allowed it; but Necker embraced it and was responsible for the lottery’s growth and prosperity.¹⁵

¹¹ “Troisième suite des observations du citoyen, Appellée, vulgairement, les Pourquoi, ou la Réponse Verte” in *Collection complète de tous les ouvrages pour et contre M. Necker* (Utrecht, 1781), 8.

¹² Pierre-Augustin Robert de Saint-Vincent, *Observations modestes d’un citoyen, sur les opérations de finances de M. Necker, & sur son compte rendu, adressées à MM. les pacifiques auteurs des Commentaires, des Pourquoi, & autres pamphlets anonymes* (n.p., 1781), 17.

¹³ Pierre Samuel Du Pont de Nemours, *Mémoires sur la vie et les ouvrages de M. Turgot, ministre d’état*, (Philadelphia, 1788 [1782]), 99-100; “corrompant les mœurs & dérangeant les fortunes des citoyens”; Condorcet also claimed that Turgot had hoped the king would suppress the Royal Lottery, Condorcet, *Vie de Monsieur Turgot* (London, 1786), 123.

¹⁴ Condorcet, *Vie de Monsieur Turgot*, 123. “dans les ruses de l’agiotage.”

¹⁵ Saint-Vincent, *Observations modestes d’un citoyen, sur les opérations de finances de M. Necker*, 17.

Necker's embrace of the Royal Lottery is not particularly surprising considering his background, and it is perfectly consistent with his ideas of public finance. Necker was an internationally known Genevan banker and financier, and as such, he encouraged borrowing money to meet the monarchy's financial needs, while taxing as little as possible.¹⁶ While Turgot tried to undermine privileges and supported free trade, Necker criticized free trade as impractical. While Turgot opposed involvement in the American War as too costly, Necker supported French involvement and encouraged paying for it with massive new borrowing. In fact, he unabashedly supported a policy of borrowing and indebtedness. On one occasion, Necker argued that should the government need 100 million livres the far superior option was to borrow the money and raise taxes just enough to pay the interest on that new debt, rather than raise taxes by 100 million livres.¹⁷ In other words, he argued that the monarchy should leverage its public credit to finance its activities.

In order to maintain this system of borrowing and public credit, Necker understood that it was essential for the monarchy to gain the trust and confidence of the public. No one, after all, would lend money to the monarchy if they feared a bankruptcy. Necker was arguably the first minister to understand the importance and power of public opinion, and he became a master at using and manipulating it.¹⁸ In 1781, he famously released the *Compte rendu au roi*, which was addressed to the king, in a common eighteenth-century trope, but clearly meant for public consumption. In fact, it went through numerous editions and sold tens of thousands of copies becoming an instant best

¹⁶ For the most recent biography of Necker, see Robert Harris, *Necker: Reform Statesman of the Ancien Régime* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1979).

¹⁷ Shovlin, *Political Economy of Virtue*, 142-150.

¹⁸ Keith Michael Baker, *Inventing the French Revolution: Essays on French Political Culture in the Eighteenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 190-191.

seller. The *Compte rendu* lifted the veil of secrecy over public finance by opening the king's books to the public for the first time.¹⁹ Although many people, including historians today, later argued about the accuracy of Necker's numbers, no one disputed that Necker was appealing openly to the public and its opinion in a very new way.²⁰ In fact, one of his ministerial rivals, the Comte de Vergennes, openly protested to Louis XVI that Necker's appeal to the public was undermining the king's royal majesty and, in particular, the absolute authority of the king.²¹ In calling for an open administration of public finance, Necker argued that "everything that is obscure, uncertain, and indefinite leads to mistrust and fear" and should be classified as bad administration.²² Necker sought transparency in all matters of public administration. By opening the king's books to the public, Necker lost the confidence of the king, but he became very popular in public opinion.

It is important to note that the differences between Turgot and Necker in matters of public finance reflected political differences as well. Both men had broad reform agendas, and both men promoted the idea of forming new provincial assemblies in order to end the political gridlock between the crown and the parlements. Under Turgot's scheme, the new assemblies in the provinces would be a way to circumvent the nobility, whose members enjoyed the privilege of not paying taxes and thus generally opposed changes to the status quo of taxation. Membership in Turgot's assemblies, on the other hand, would be based exclusively on income from land rather than membership in the

¹⁹ Baker, *Inventing the French Revolution*, 190-191, and Kwass, *Privilege and the Politics of Taxation in Eighteenth-Century France*, 214-216.

²⁰ On the arguments about the veracity of the *Compte rendu*, see Harris, *Necker: Reform Statesman*, 217-235.

²¹ Munro Price, *Preserving the Monarchy: The Comte de Vergennes, 1774-1787* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 56-57.

²² Quoted in Kwass, *Privilege and the Politics of Taxation in Eighteenth-Century France*, 239.

traditional and privileged Old Regime estates. This also meant, however, that the membership would be limited to those who were vested economically in French society, understood as landholding. These new institutions would be called upon to approve royal actions, particularly in matters of public finance and taxation. They were, then, meant to undermine the power of the privileged parlements.²³ But with their membership based on income from land, they were also far from a broad sweeping expansion of the public's role in politics. In fact, Keith Baker has argued that Turgot's ideas about provincial assemblies, which were never enacted, were meant to mitigate public opinion rather than empower it. The new provincial assemblies were meant to be a check on the parlements' power, rather than giving a true institution for the expression of public opinion. If anything, they represented an expansion of monarchical power by undercutting its most entrenched institutional opponent in the parlements.²⁴ It must also be remembered that Turgot made his reputation as an intendant of Limoges. And in many circles, the title of intendant was synonymous with arbitrary despotism, since the intendant acted with the direct authority and power of the king in the provinces, most notably in matters of taxation, and they answered to no institution other than the monarchy.²⁵ Intendants were often at loggerheads with other Old Regime institutions, as those institutions resisted an expansion of the monarchy's influence and a diminishing of theirs. Turgot's provincial assemblies were consistent with the ethos of an intendant and the privileging of a stronger monarchy.

²³ Kwass, *Privilege and the Politics of Taxation in Eighteenth-Century France*, 257-260, and Shovlin, *Political Economy*, 142-144.

²⁴ Baker, *Inventing the French Revolution*, 189.

²⁵ Kwass, *Privilege and the Politics of Taxation in Eighteenth-Century France*, 160-169.

Necker also had a plan for provincial assemblies, which, like Turgot's plan, was meant to undermine the power of the parlements and their ability to obstruct reform. Necker's provincial assemblies, however, would be very different from Turgot's. Rather than a system of representation based on income from land, Necker proposed a system based on the Old Regime structure of estates. Necker included a key innovation though. The representatives from the third estate would be doubled, and unlike the provincial estates, the members of the new provincial assemblies would vote by head, not estate—anticipating the same crisis that arose from the calling of the Estates General in 1789. Necker's scheme effectively gave the third estate, regardless of their income, wealth, or land holdings, as much say in decisions as the privileged orders combined.²⁶ These measures were meant to expand the influence of public opinion, rather than mitigate it. As he noted, “when the grumbling [of taxpayers] degenerates into general complaint, the Parlement moves to place itself between the King and his people.”²⁷ Necker sought to empower the public by setting up a direct dialogue with the king rather than an indirect dialogue through the parlements. He also meant to mitigate the exertion of monarchical power. With reference to the notorious intendant system, of which Turgot had been a part, Necker asked, “how can people look well upon the king's orders to send soldiers to the house of a taxpayer, and to sell his furniture and his bed?”²⁸ This was particularly true, he suggested, if they had no political voice, which Necker sought to rectify.

It is worth reflecting here for a moment on Turgot, Necker, and the Royal Lottery. Both men were reformers. As innovative as his economic reforms may have been and as far reaching as their social implications may have been, Turgot sought a fundamental

²⁶ Ibid., 260-266.

²⁷ Quoted in Kwass, *Privilege and the Politics of Taxation in Eighteenth-Century France*, 261.

²⁸ Quoted in Kwass, *Privilege and the Politics of Taxation in Eighteenth-Century France*, 262.

expansion of the role of taxation in French fiscal life, and taxes were always vulnerable to charges of arbitrary despotism. Necker, on the other hand, did everything he could to avoid new taxes. Whether that was best for the monarchy's finances or the French economy is for another discussion. Nonetheless, his approach was much more politically viable. In the end, the Royal Lottery became so closely associated with Necker because, like Necker's other financial maneuvers, the lottery was politically viable and nearly immune from charges of arbitrariness, despotism, and coercion due to its overt appeal to public opinion.

Early Ideas for Consolidating the Lottery System

Although 1776 was the pivotal year that led to the creation of the Royal Lottery, there had been ideas floating around for some kind of consolidation of the lottery system for some time. The period between 1745 and 1765 saw a dramatic increase in the lottery market. Not only did profits soar for the *trois petites loteries*—the three permanent lotteries authorized for charitable purposes—but numerous new lotteries came into existence. Indeed, by 1765 there were five “private” lotteries with the Loterie Générale and the Loterie de Ville joining the other three. And there was the “public” Loterie de l'École Militaire.²⁹ In just a few years, the number of lotteries had doubled and profits had soared. Correspondingly during the 1760s and 1770s, there were increasing

²⁹ This distinction between “private” and “public” lotteries in reference the legal lotteries of mid-century was made in the royal order creating the Royal Lottery. BN, Fonds français 22115. *Arrêt du Conseil d'État du Roi. Portant suppression, à compter des 1^{er} & 6 Août prochain, des Loteries de l'École royale Militaire, de l'Hôtel-de-Ville de Paris, de la Générale d'Association & de celle des Communautés Religieuses. Création d'une nouvelle Loterie sous le nom de Loterie Royale de France. Et union à la régie de la Loterie Royale, des Loteries des Enfants-Trouvés & de Piété qui sont conservées. Du 30 Juin 1776.* (Paris, 1776).

rumblings to consolidate the numerous lotteries into one lottery to make the lottery system more manageable and more profitable through bureaucratic centralization. The archives contain many proposals for such consolidations by private individuals—primarily unsolicited plans in which the government was promised huge gains and the writer simply demanded an annual pension or position of some type.³⁰ None of these plans gained much traction, and none of them was enacted. Nonetheless, they do reveal quite a bit about the changing attitudes about the relationship between the French lottery system and the French state that would ultimately lead to the creation of the Royal Lottery, which did incorporate many of the suggestions contained in the numerous proposals.

The various promoters of a consolidated lottery almost always gave two main reasons to adopt their plan: increased profits for the lotteries and advantages for the public. For example, one plan called for the suppression of the *trois petites loteries* in favor of a new “Lotterie Générale.” The plan proposed a monthly drawing with tickets sold for three livres each, but consumers could subdivide the tickets as well. The lottery would sell 400,000 tickets each month but only take a 15% profit instead of the 22% profit that the *trois loteries* took. As with most of the similar proposals, this one promised that the public would readily embrace it. First, the players’ equity was higher, and second, since the single lottery was on a greater scale, it would be able to offer even bigger winning lots—indeed, the biggest proposed winning lot was 100,000 livres. The plan also noted that since syndicates of players could buy tickets, individuals would be able to participate for a smaller sum of money. This would increase interest in the lottery itself, but it would also weaken consumer interest in foreign lotteries. The foreign

³⁰ These proposals are in, AN, H5 3633, G9 114, and G9 115.

lotteries, particularly the Dutch and German lotteries, had become an increasingly competitive problem for the French lotteries, whose tickets often sold at a higher price than those of foreign lotteries. In fact, competition with foreign lotteries would later become a key consideration with the founding of the Royal Lottery as I discuss below. Besides benefiting the players, consolidation of lotteries would benefit the charitable organizations as well, since this new lottery would produce about 25% more profit for the charitable groups than did the *trois petites loteries*.³¹ As with most of the plans, this one seemed to be the proverbial win-win situation: the players benefited as well as the charitable organizations.

Another plan, *Projet d'une Loterie Générale*, claimed it would revive the public's apparently tepid interest in the lotteries. The new lottery would consist of 20-sous tickets and take a profit of only 15%. The lottery would be drawn in Paris three times a month, which corresponded to the three monthly drawing of the *trois loteries*, but it would also hold drawings in the provinces once a month. And of course, the author claimed that the charitable groups would all earn more under his scheme.³² Again, this scheme would be better for both the consumer and those operating the lotteries.

One dominant theme through many of these proposals was the consolidation of all lotteries under one *régie* run by the royal government. This was a relatively new idea, since lotteries had always been the preserve of corporations, communities, and on the rare occasion, individuals. The king had regulated these lotteries, but they stayed within the Old Regime structure of corporatism and privilege. For the government to place itself at

³¹ AN, H5 3633. *Plan d'une Loterie Générale à 3# le billet, pour substituer aux trois qui existent en les suprimant*. n.d.

³² AN, G9 115. *Projet d'une Loterie Générale*. There is no date on this proposal, but it does give profit totals for the various charitable organizations for 1758. It is thus reasonable to assume that the proposal was written in 1759.

the head of a lottery *régie* would mean a fundamental reordering of the French lottery system. The king had previously regulated the *trois petites loteries*, and in doing so, he acted in his standard role as intermediary and arbiter—both looking after the corporate needs of the Hôpital des Enfants Trouvés, and ensuring the fair treatment of the king's subjects in the form of lottery consumers. But the king played no direct role in the operation of the lottery. With the flurry of proposals for consolidation in the 1760s and 1770s, there was a palpable change in attitude. As the lotteries and their revenues continued to expand, there was a greater sense that the monarchy should take a more direct role within the lottery system.

There is perhaps no better example of this changing sentiment than a *mémoire* written in 1772 by a de Rodouan de Mortaincourt to Henri Bertin, the former Controller General who at the time had broad authority for overseeing the lotteries. His *Mémoire sur les Loteries* proposed affixing a *dixième*, a tax of a tenth of income, on lottery winnings. He suggested that the new tax be divided between the winning players and the organization running the lottery. But in proposing this new tax, de Rodouan de Mortaincourt proposed a fundamentally new conception of the French lottery system in which the king himself had a direct stake. He noted that, “lotteries have been authorized only for the benefit of corps, communities and individuals.” But why, the author asked, should there not be established a tax on the lottery profits for “the well-being of the Kingdom”? The proposed new tax would be easy and cheap to collect since there was always a published list of winning lots, and the tax could be taken out before the players ever received their prize. De Rodouan de Mortaincourt estimated that the new tax would provide half a million livres a year from Paris alone. Perhaps most importantly, this tax

would raise money without “being onerous to the people, and could only be very beneficial to the well-being of the state.”³³ Lotteries, the author suggested, should no longer be the special preserve of privileged groups in which the king acted as a simple arbiter; rather the king should take an active role in directly profiting from them. This was a far cry from the days of the charitable lotteries of mid-century.

In the years preceding the Royal Lottery, there was an increasing clamor for fundamental changes in the French lottery system which had become ever more unwieldy. In the numerous proposals, there was an increasing sense that only the government could create an economy of scale that would be beneficial to the state, the charitable organizations, and consumers. To be sure, benefiting and pleasing the consumer were just as important as any other factor to the rationales of these proposals. The proposals also called for the creation of a centralized *régie* in which the government would extend itself into the lottery market and directly profit from it. This idea of a permanent centralized royal *régie* was a radical idea in that it altered the French monarchy’s role in the lottery system such that it would no longer stand above the actors in the lottery market but rather become an actor itself within the lottery system and thus the lottery market.

³³ AN, G9 114. *Arrêts, mémoires, comptes des diverses loteries et des coupes de bois sur le produit desquelles étaient prélevés les secours, 1742-1801. Mémoire sur les Loteries*, from de Rodouan de Mortaincourt to Bertin, April 30, 1772. “Les Loteries n’ont été autorisées que pour l’avantage des corps, communautes ou personnes”; “les biens du Royaume.”; “être onéreux au peuple, et ne peut qu’être fort avantageux pour le bien de l’état.”

Founding the Royal Lottery: Satisfying the Consuming Public and Its Taste

The Royal Lottery officially came into existence with an order from the King's Council issued on June 30, 1776.³⁴ It is worth noting that the lottery was founded by an *arrêt du conseil*. Unlike some other official orders, such as edicts or declarations, orders of the royal council, or *arrêts du conseil*, were not sent to the Parlement of Paris for registration. They were unilateral decisions by the king in his council. They were published by royal presses and distributed and enforced through the offices of the intendants, who answered only to the king. By contrast, taxation legislation almost always had to go through the parlements for registration.³⁵ Considering the tensions with the parlements in 1776, it is not surprising that the monarchy simply issued a direct decree, thereby bypassing the parlements altogether.³⁶

The very decreeing of the Royal Lottery was representative of the changing relationship between king and subjects. Royal orders, particularly *arrets du conseil*, had another important political implication: direct communication between the monarch and his subjects. Printed decrees had always been used to explain new laws and regulations, but in the eighteenth century decrees, and particularly the preambles, changed subtlety from mere explanation to justification. They became a way for the monarchy to speak directly to his subjects in an effort to win their support. Necker, a master of using and manipulating public opinion, noted the political significance of decrees:

in France, where those in power must take the character of the nation into account, and where state ministers themselves feel at each moment the need for

³⁴ BN, Fonds français 22115. *Arrest du Conseil d'État du Roi...Création d'une nouvelle Loterie sous le nom de Loterie Royale de France... Du 30 Juin 1776.*

³⁵ For a discussion of royal orders, see Roland Mousnier, *The Institutions of France under the Absolute Monarchy, Volume II: The Organs of State and Society*, translated by Arthur Goldhammer (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984), 235-250; also, see Baker, *Inventing the French Revolution*, 170; and Kwass, *Privilege and the Politics of Taxation in Eighteenth-Century France*, 38-47.

³⁶ For a thorough analysis of French constitutional thought, see Baker, *Inventing the French Revolution*.

public approval, it is believed essential to explain the purpose behind the wishes of the monarchy, as these wishes manifest themselves to the people, whether by edicts or simple *arrêts du conseil* of the Prince. This responsibility, so politic and so just, is especially applicable to laws of finance.³⁷

The royal order for the new Royal Lottery, both the preamble and the main body, is very important as a text because it represents a direct appeal to public opinion.

This royal order took on particular importance as a text, because the Royal Lottery had a more direct connection with the monarchy than any previous lottery. It was the first permanent lottery directly organized and operated by the French government for the benefit of the state. Furthermore, and perhaps more importantly, it was operated primarily for the benefit of the French state rather than for specific charitable ends. Indeed, the preamble to the 1776 *arrêt* made little pretense of charity or, for that matter, absolutist discourse of paternalism—as had the preamble of the edict that established the Loterie de l'École Militaire in 1757. Moreover, it explicitly put this new Royal Lottery, and consequently the state, within the competitive lottery marketplace. The June 30, 1776 order fully immersed the French state within the commercially-oriented lottery market in order to benefit the state financially.

That market was international. Indeed, foreign lotteries had posed a competitive problem for the French lottery system for as long as it had existed, even though foreign lotteries were strictly proscribed within France. French subjects were only allowed to play lotteries that had been officially approved by the French state, yet clandestine receivers for foreign lotteries worked actively throughout France, especially in Paris. Of particular competitive concern were the Dutch and German lotteries—both of which had a major, and illegal, presence in Paris. The government made repeated efforts to squelch

³⁷ Quoted in Kwass, *Privilege and the Politics of Taxation in Eighteenth-Century France*, 39.

such clandestine activities with repeated orders by the Parlement of Paris and the King's Council, especially a royal order of April 9, 1752, which allowed for a maximum fine of 3,000 livres for distributing foreign lottery tickets. These measures were to no avail. The police also made a concerted effort throughout the 1750s to put an end to clandestine selling of foreign lottery tickets, but only to be frustrated by a lack of progress.³⁸

Having failed to enforce its will effectively through use of legal and police coercion, with the Royal Lottery, the French monarchy tried another tactic: commercial competition. The preamble to the 1776 *arrêt* stated unambiguously the monarchy's frustration over foreign competition: all of "the different lotteries established up until now in the kingdom have not been able to prevent his [the king's] subjects from placing their funds in foreign countries in order to take their chances and try their luck in the lottery games which exist there." The king had even taken the rather extraordinary measure of allowing the École Royale Militaire to offer "to the public a game similar to those of Rome, Genoa, Venice, Milan, Naples, and Vienna in Austria, [which] has not stopped this depositing of the kingdom's money in other foreign lotteries." Though the king had made an effort to appease the public and prevent the play of foreign lotteries by offering one similar to them, it was to no avail. This resulted in "a noticeable harm for the state, and which merits all the more attention from His Majesty in that the amount...forms a considerable sum."³⁹ As we saw in the previous chapter, the royal order of October 14, 1757, which decreed the Loterie de l'École Militaire, made every

³⁸ Francis Freundlich, *Le monde du jeu à Paris (1715-1800)* (Paris: Albin Michel, 1995), 147-149.

³⁹ BN, Fond français 22115. *Arrêt du Conseil d'État du Roi...Création d'une nouvelle Loterie sous le nom de Loterie Royale de France... Du 30 Juin 1776*. Preamble. "les différentes Loteries établies jusqu'à présent dans le royaume, n'auroient pu empêcher ses sujets de porter leurs fonds dans les Pays étrangers, pour y courir les hasards & tenter fortune dans le jeu des Loteries qui y existent"; "au Public un jeu semblable à celles de Rome, Gènes, Venise, Milan, Naples & Vienne en Autriche, n'avoit pas arrêté ce versement de l'argent du royaume dans d'autres Loteries étrangères;" "un préjudice sensible pour l'État, & qui mérite d'autant plus l'attention de Sa Majesté, que le montant...forme un objet considérable."

effort to place that lottery within the absolutist and paternalistic discourse of the Old Regime. Indeed, in that earlier decree the king seemed to go out of his way to avoid the mention of profit. Yet less than twenty years later the tone of the 1776 decree was drastically different. Not merely unafraid to mention profit, the 1776 order nearly jettisoned paternalistic discourse altogether. It reads more like a merchant trying to maximize his profits than an absolutist king announcing his will.

After stating unambiguously that the lotteries were a matter of commercial, fiscal, and economic importance, the decree noted that the prohibition against foreign lotteries was simply not effective. The only way to combat the flow of French money into foreign lotteries was to lure French consumers away from them and into a new French lottery. As the order stated, the king “has no other remedy than to obtain for his subjects a new lottery from which the different games, in presenting to them the risks that they desire, are capable of satisfying and fixing their [the subjects’] taste.”⁴⁰ With this passage, the king strikingly conceded that his theoretically absolute will was completely ineffective in this matter. He therefore turned to the market to achieve his will. If the state could not force French subjects to conform to the state’s will, it could nonetheless achieve the same result by offering a better product—that is, by “satisfying and fixing their [the consumers’] taste.”

This new lottery would be one “in which several chances have been added to that of the École Militaire and to all those which exist in foreign countries.”⁴¹ I will discuss this more later, but basically the Royal Lottery allowed the wagering on four and five

⁴⁰ Ibid., Preamble. “il ne pouvoit y avoir d’autre remède que de procurer à ses sujets une nouvelle Loterie dont les différens jeux, en leur présentant les hasards qu’ils veulent chercher, soient capables de satisfaire & de fixer leur goût.”

⁴¹ Ibid., Preamble. “dans laquelle plussieurs chances ont été ajoutées à celle de l’École militaire & à toutes celles qui existent dans les Pays étrangers.”

numbers. The chance of hitting all five numbers was very remote but the winning lot would be huge. This measure would thus offer the promise of a truly huge win that no other lottery in Europe could offer, and would then lure consumer spending toward the Royal Lottery and away from the foreign lotteries.

In the same vein, the decree also noted that the drawings of this new lottery “will be more frequent in the town of Paris, and will be able to be performed in the principle towns and frontiers of the kingdom with the effect of preventing more certainly the exportation, so harmful to the state, of money into foreign countries.”⁴² The lottery would be drawn more frequently and in a greater number of locations in hopes that an increased drawing frequency would give consumers more opportunities to play and thus reduce the tendency to play the multitude of foreign lotteries. Again, the French state appealed to the desires of its consuming subjects. The assumption was, of course, that French lottery consumers played foreign lotteries because they desired to play the lottery more frequently. Proscription had failed, so the state capitulated to what it perceived as consumer demand by increasing the number of drawings as well as expanding them throughout France. Rather than using the coercive apparatus of the state, the French government entered into the international competitive lottery marketplace.

The lotteries’ fixation on consumers’ demands and interests was nothing new. From the very beginning of the *trois petites loteries*, lottery administrators understood that the consumer had power, and that it was just as important to satisfy the consumers as it was to satisfy the lottery’s beneficiaries. This 1776 royal decree, however, went one step further by admitting the king’s own political impotence in enforcing his will and

⁴² Ibid., Preamble. “seront plus fréquens pour la ville de Paris, & pourront être exécutés dans les principes villes & frontières du royaume, à l’effet d’empêcher plus sûrement l’exportation, si préjudiciable à l’État, de l’argent dans les Pays étrangers.”

elevating the consumers' will. Furthermore by using an *arrêt du conseil*, the king circumvented the parlement completely to speak and appeal to his subjects directly as consumers. With the advent of the Royal Lottery, the absolutist state gave up on the idea of imposing the king's will on either the parlements or the people, and instead made a conscious decision to align the king's will with that of the people and it did so by viewing the people as consumers.

Indemnifying the Suppressed Lotteries

The monarchy may not have been able to control the clandestine selling of foreign lottery tickets, but it could control what the monarchy itself sanctioned. And at the time of the royal order of June 30, 1776, there were six legal lotteries in France. Interestingly and without defining the difference, the royal order distinguished between public and private lotteries for the first time in a legal text. There was one "public" lottery in the Loterie de l'École Royale Militaire, and then the order refers to the others as the "five private lotteries" [*cinq Loteries particulières*]. This was no doubt a simple recognition of the fact that the Loterie de l'École Militaire benefited, at least indirectly, the French military which was intimately attached to the monarchy itself. The five private lotteries were: the Loterie de l'Hôtel de Ville, the Loterie de la Général d'Association, the Loterie des Communautés Religieuses, the Loterie des Enfants Trouvés, and the Loterie de Piété, which had previously gone under the name Loterie de Saint-Sulpice. Recognizing that "the multiplicity of other lotteries existing in Paris carries a notable harm" to the others, the King decided to suppress the Loterie de l'École Royale Militaire as well as three of

the five “private” lotteries—those being the Loterie de l’Hôtel de Ville, the Loterie de la Général d’Association, and the Loterie des Communautés Religieuses. The order also decreed that the foundations supported by these suppressed lotteries would continue to be supported from funds of the new Royal Lottery. The foundations were to receive an amount equal to the lotteries to the sum of the average of the profits of the previous ten years. The Loterie de l’École Militaire was treated a bit different, because rather than being permanent, it only had a thirty-year privilege. The idea behind that lottery was to help build the new school. Presumably, once the school was built, the school would no longer need the lottery’s income. That lottery was thus set to expire in November of 1787. Accordingly, the order of the Royal Lottery allowed for an indemnity for the École Militaire set to expire at that date.⁴³

The King’s Council issued two *extraits des registres* on March 31, 1777 and two more on April 6, 1777 that detailed exactly what the indemnities would be for those private lotteries. The *extraits des registres* made clear that the two remaining private lotteries, the Loterie des Enfants Trouvés and the Loterie de Piété, would be folded into the new Royal Lottery *régie*. The foundations supported by those lotteries would receive a fixed sum based upon the previous ten years profit the same as the suppressed lotteries would have. In other words, the lotteries would still be operated by the government through the Royal Lottery offices but any new profit would go to the French state. The Loterie de Piété, which had replaced the Loterie de Saint-Sulpice, supported the building of Sainte-Genève, the building of la Magdelaine, and “other works of piety and public usefulness.” For the years 1765 through 1774, the lottery made a total profit, after expenses, of 5,055,522 livres, which came to an annual indemnity of 505,552 livres. Of

⁴³ Ibid., Preamble. “que la multiplicité des autres Loteries existantes à Paris porte un préjudice notables.”

that, the *receveur générale* of the Royal Lottery was to give Sainte-Geneviève 219,290 livres a year over twelve monthly payments. Likewise, la Magdelaine was to receive 122,377 livres a year, and the “other works” were to receive 163,384 livres a year.⁴⁴ The other *extrait* of March 31, 1777 related to the suppressed Loterie Générale, which supported “different objects worthy of religion and the attention of His Majesty.” For the years 1766 through 1775, the lottery made a net profit of 2,653,631 livres, so it would receive an annual indemnity of 265,363 livres a year, again in twelve monthly payments, to those “different objects.”⁴⁵

In granting these charitable indemnities, the king had displayed “his paternal care to the establishments of charity and piety which exist and are designated for his protection” and benevolence, yet that support was now set at a fixed amount. The monarch only “resolved to apply a part of the product of the new lottery” toward charitable causes.⁴⁶ Where the other part of the product would go was not entirely clear. The Royal Lottery decree does mention that two sous of every livre, which was 10 percent, of the lottery’s net profit—after expenses and indemnities had been paid—would be put aside in order “to form a fund which His Majesty has reserved for his private disposal.” The funds were to be deposited by the lottery’s *caissier général* “into the hands of a treasurer who will be named by His Majesty.”⁴⁷ The use of that money would be completely at the discretion of the king and furthermore would even bypass the

⁴⁴ AN, G9 114. *Extrait des registres du conseil d’Etat du Roy. Loterie de Piété. 31 Mars 1777.* “d’autres oeuvres de piété et d’utilité publique.”

⁴⁵ Ibid., “différentes objets dignes de la religion et de l’attention de Sa Majesté.”

⁴⁶ BN, Fond français 22115. *Arrêt du Conseil d’État du Roi...Création d’une nouvelle Loterie sous le nom de Loterie Royale de France... Du 30 Juin 1776.* Preamble. “ses soins paternels aux établissemens de charité & de piété qui existent & qui sont dignes de sa protection”; “résolu d’appliquer une partie du produit de la nouvelle Loterie”. The indemnity of the École Militaire is discussed in article II of the decree.

⁴⁷ Ibid., Article XII. “former un fonds dont Sa Majesté s’est réservé la disposition particulière”; “entre les mains du Trésorier qui sera nommé par Sa Majesté.”

Controller General who was in charge of oversight of the lottery. There remained another 18 sous for every livre of pure profit—90%—that would go directly to the state’s general coffers. It is also significant that the amounts given to those suppressed lotteries were fixed, because any growth in the lottery market and expansion of profits would go directly into the state’s general coffers. Rather than the expanding lottery market benefiting charity, it would now benefit the monarchy.

The Loterie des Enfants Trouvés and the Loterie de Piété were both preserved but put under the *régie* of the Royal Lottery. It is not clear why these two lotteries were maintained, or for that matter, why they were put under the new and massive *régie*.⁴⁸ Regardless, the measure had the effect of increasing bureaucratic standardization within the lottery system, since all of the officially sanctioned lotteries would now operate under one bureaucratic roof. And as a result, the state continued to tighten its control over the whole lottery system, and it certainly put the government one step closer to the consumer—even consumers of the two “private” lotteries since they were now run by the state.

The suppression of the four lotteries and the placing of the other two under the Royal Lottery *régie* represented a watershed in the history of the French lottery system. Without the suppression and reorganization of these lotteries, the formation of the Royal Lottery would have simply been yet another lottery—albeit operated by the state for the profit of the state. But with these suppressions, the French state exerted an official monopoly on the lottery system and thus a monopoly on its profits. Of course, it exerted an “official” monopoly because there was still the problem of the clandestine selling of foreign lottery tickets. It is the great irony of the Royal Lottery that the monarchy

⁴⁸ Ibid., Preamble.

defended its formation with an ideology of free, commercial competition and yet it suppressed or controlled domestic competition. The very act of indemnifying the organizations that lost their lotteries reveals some sense of moral unease, or at least appeasement, at this contradiction and tension. The other lotteries were very popular, after all, and it was often reasoned that they were popular because players were consoled that their losses helped a good cause. The Royal Lottery thus sought to appease this presumed condition with those indemnities. In other words, the Royal Lottery was a real watershed and a very real break within the lottery system and yet the monarchy seemed disinclined to break completely from the implicit assumption that consumers' motives were driven by charity. The monarchy cow-towed to those presumed consumers' will with those indemnities.

Outlining the Lottery Bureaucracy: Reassuring and Enticing Consumers

The royal decree crafted an ideology of free market competition in which the state interacted with its subjects as consumers. In order to do this, the state had to build a bureaucratic structure that reinforced the consuming public's confidence in the lottery organization. Earlier in the century, consumers worried about the integrity of individual lotteries. Consumers always worried about the possibility that the lottery might not pay out the winning prize or that the lottery might go bankrupt altogether. By 1776, there had been nearly a half-century history of permanent and stable lotteries in France, and yet none had been on the scope, scale, or depth of geographic penetration. The French government was well aware that this new lottery was going to be a massive undertaking

and that “the *régie* and administration of this new lottery [will be] more complicated and extensive than any of those which have existed up until now.”⁴⁹ The government assumed that the sheer magnitude of the lottery would cause consumers anxiety, so they adumbrated the bureaucratic structure and procedures of this new lottery in an unprecedented fashion. Other lotteries gave relatively little information about their inner workings. The Loterie de l’École Militaire gave quite extensive explanations of its wagering system to the public, but that was because it was new and complicated. The Royal Lottery unashamedly opened its structure and the authority of that structure to the public.

A lottery of this size could only be managed by a strong and centralized authority and the monarchy made sure to impose its administrative apparatus on the Royal Lottery. Michael Kwass has shown how the monarchy superimposed its own system of intendants and *commissaires départis* over Old Regime corporate society and privilege in order to enact a more thorough and efficient system of direct taxation.⁵⁰ The king did much the same with his new lottery as he did with direct taxation—even using the same officials in the intendants and the *commissaires départis*. Unlike the Loterie de l’École Militaire and the “private” lotteries, this new Royal Lottery would be a strict agent of the French monarchy and its bureaucracy. There was to be no ambiguity about the authority and jurisdiction of the Royal Lottery and its agents. Side stepping all local nobility, customs, and parlements, all contestations in the provinces relative to the lottery would be settled by the intendants and *commissaires départis*. And similarly, the Lieutenant General of

⁴⁹ Ibid., Preamble. “la régie & administration de cette nouvelle Loterie, plus compliquée & étendue qu’aucune de celles qui ont existé jusqu’à présent.”

⁵⁰ Kwass, *Privilege and the Politics of Taxation in Eighteenth-Century France*, 47-61.

Police would settle all lottery disputes for Paris and its suburbs.⁵¹ All of these officials were strictly agents of the king and held accountable only to the king and his ministers. There was thus a chain of command between the king at the very top to the lowly receiver at bottom. This was truly a “royal” lottery, which was engaged directly with its consumers without any interference from any intermediaries.

Having affirmed the lottery’s administrative strength, consumers still needed to be assured of the lottery’s financial strength. It was common with eighteenth-century lotteries to have a large deposit as a capital reserve before the first drawing was ever held to calm potential fears of possible default. Consumers came to expect this safety measure. Of course, the larger the lottery prizes the larger the deposit that was required as a guarantee. No lottery could match the size of the Royal Lottery, and indeed, the state recognized “the necessary surety of funds which will be paid on this new lottery and the most exact execution of the commitments of this *régie* toward the public demands funds in advance and considerable deposits.” To achieve that goal, all twelve administrators were required as part of their positions to deposit 300,000 livres into the *caissier général* of the lottery and were to receive the standard interest of five percent. A total of 3,600,000 livres were deposited to guarantee the public’s payment for initial winning lots.⁵² That amount dwarfed the mere 500,000 livres that Pâris-Duverney put up to guarantee the whole of the Loterie de l’École Militaire, which was itself the largest lottery France had known at the time of its founding in 1757.

The surety was intended to reassure consumers, but it had to be managed well by well-respected, trustworthy individuals for the surety to have any real value for public

⁵¹ BN, Fond français 22115. *Arrêt du Conseil d’État du Roi...Création d’une nouvelle Loterie sous le nom de Loterie Royale de France... Du 30 Juin 1776.* Article XIV.

⁵² Ibid., Article IX.

confidence. To achieve this, “a number of choice individuals and worthy of public confidence by their fortune and their good reputation” would be selected as an intendant of the Lottery as well as some *administrateurs généraux* who would answer to the Controller General.⁵³ It is worth emphasizing that individuals would be selected not just based upon their worthiness but also based on their “good reputation.” Their good reputation had to be known to the public in order to reinforce public confidence. Consumption of lottery tickets was, after all, voluntary, and consumers could simply abstain from purchasing tickets if they had any doubt about the integrity of the game or the organization behind it. Antoine Blanquet was named as the first intendant and the eleven other administrators were: d’Autmarr-Dervillé, Semonin, du Perreux, de Bullongne, de Pange, Dangé, d’Arlincourt, Hébert, Préaudeau, de la Combe, Mazières, and Darboulain de Richebourg.⁵⁴

Perhaps few representatives of the lottery were as crucial to upholding public confidence as the receivers. They were the ones, after all, who operated the local lottery office for ticket consumers to come in off the street and make their purchases. And it was the receiver who most often took the consumers’ money and paid the winners. In many ways, the receivers were the linchpin of the whole system. Furthermore, receiver indebtedness, fraud, and contestation between receivers and consumers had been a constant problem for the Loterie de l’École Militaire. The government was determined to minimize the Royal Lottery’s receiver problems. To that end, before obtaining their license, receivers were required to make a deposit guarantee—the amount to be

⁵³ Ibid., Preamble. “La sûreté nécessaire des fonds qui seront versés dans la nouvelle Loterie, & l’exécution la plus exacte des engagements de sa régie envers le Public, exigeant des fonds d’avance & des cautionnemens considérables”; “un nombre de personnes choisies & dignes de la confiance publique par leur fortune & leur bonne réputation”.

⁵⁴ Ibid., Article III.

determined by the Controller General—just as the administrators were required to do, and likewise, they would earn five percent interest on that money.⁵⁵ These measures were an effort on the part of the state to recruit more competent and especially wealthier agents for the new lottery. Requiring larger deposits would ensure the lottery’s ability to recoup large sums of money in case of fraud—both for itself and for players who may have been cheated. But more importantly, it would strongly discourage fraud since people with the wealth to make such a deposit would be less inclined to commit fraud in the first place.⁵⁶

The painting in Image 4.1 depicts the happenings immediately outside of the office of a receiver of the Royal Lottery. By looking at the upper right side of the image, we see that the office is located on the “Rue de la Fortune.” No doubt this image is very much the one the *régie* of the lottery would have wanted presented. The receiver’s office is clearly delineated by the sign over the doorway significantly marked “Loterie Royale de France.” The marking at once owns the space inside yet is unobtrusive as those in the image seem free of the building and its owner, the Royal Lottery. The scene is marked by the peaceful, even cheerful, coexistence of the lottery players and the lottery functionaries and king’s soldiers. It is unclear why exactly the soldiers are in the scene, but it is certainly not to extract money. Instead, the players are returning their winning tickets to receive their prizes. With the winning numbers plainly visible on the placard below the marquee, the players are returning their tickets to the receiver seated with his accounts book before him. It is simply a matter of casual exchange without the slightest hint of contention or dispute. The entire scene is one of peace and harmony. Even the receiver’s office blends seamlessly into the city scene behind as the street and its

⁵⁵ Ibid., Article X.

⁵⁶ Freundlich, *Le monde du jeu à Paris (1715-1800)*, 142.

buildings fade into the distance. While the image is specifically of a receiver's office, it can also be read as a depiction of the Royal Lottery itself as fitting harmoniously into French life.

There was a similar effort to depict and portray lottery drawings as equally calm and reassuring. The drawings were to be held twice a month in Paris on the first and sixteenth of each month, and they too were orchestrated in such a way as to garner public confidence. They would be drawn in the Hôtel de la Compagnie des Indes. Perhaps most importantly though, the drawings would happen publicly and in the presence of the Lieutenant General of Police, the intendant, and *administrateurs généraux* of the lottery. The drawings would thus be done under both the watchful eyes of the public and royal officials. Likewise, the drawings in the provinces would be done publicly in the local Hôtels de Ville and in the presence of both the local intendant and *commissaire départi* as well as the local director of the lottery. The provincial drawings were to be done in the presence of the mayor and *échevins*.⁵⁷ Image 4.2 depicts one such drawing, most likely in Paris. The officials sit at a raised table while facing the crowd attending the drawing. The crowd likewise sits below facing the officials. Between the two groups and in the middle of both of their lines of vision is the wheel of fortune with a child picking the numbers randomly. Another person stands behind the officials to hold up a larger likeness of the number for the crowd to see. The scene is bustling but not chaotic. There seems to be a soldier in the foreground, but he appears more distracted than attentive or menacing. Everyone has a part to play, even if that part is merely to watch. In fact, the

⁵⁷ BN, Fond français 22115. *Arrêt du Conseil d'État du Roi...Création d'une nouvelle Loterie sous le nom de Loterie Royale de France... Du 30 Juin 1776. Article VIII.*

public gaze and attention of all involved seems to be the most important aspect. This image serves to reinforce a sense of confidence in the equity and integrity of the drawing.

The public nature of the drawings upheld the integrity of the game, but the lottery still had to entice consumers to purchase tickets. To do this, the Royal Lottery would operate as a Genoese-style lottery, just like the Loterie de l'École Militaire. The Genoese-style lottery, as opposed to a raffle-style lottery, used 90 numbers, and the players could wager on multiple combinations. This style of lottery was generally accepted as more popular with the public, since the players “will be free of placing their stakes on such a number and such quantity of numbers that it pleases them to choose from the number 1 up to and including the number 90.”⁵⁸ This feature alone made the Genoese lotteries much more popular than the previous raffle lotteries.

The Loterie de l'École Militaire used the same Genoese-style lottery. The Royal Lottery, however, had an even more complex wagering system which allowed for potentially jaw dropping prizes and thus more interest and excitement among potential players. There were seven different possible wagers: *extrait simple*, *extrait déterminé*, *ambe simple*, *ambe déterminé*, *terne*, *quaterne*, and *quine*. Just as with the Loterie de l'École Militaire, the *extrait* was simply a wager on any one number being drawn, while the *extrait déterminé* was an entirely new invention in which the player picked one number but also guessed the precise order in which it was drawn—first, second, third, fourth, or fifth. The *ambe* was two numbers, and the *ambe déterminé* was likewise two numbers and their precise order. The *terne* was a wager on three numbers, the *quaterne*

⁵⁸ Ibid., Plan de La Loterie. “sera libre de placer sa mise sur tel numéro & telle quantité de numéros qu’il lui plaira choisir, depuis le numéro 1 jusques & compris le numéro 90.”

on four, and the *quine* was a guess on all five numbers.⁵⁹ Of course, the unique aspect of this lottery was the use of the *déterminé* and also the formal use of the *quaterne* and *quine*. The École Militaire's lottery only allowed for the wagering on multiple *ambes* and *ternes*, while the Royal Lottery codified the wagering on four or five numbers as players desired.

These more complicated wagers were also more difficult statistically to win. Again taking the Loterie de l'École Militaire as its model, the Royal Lottery set a minimum and maximum amount for every wager. The seven different wagers from the *extrait* to the *quine* were, respectively: 1 sou to 6,000 livres, 12 sous to 1,000 livres, 6 deniers to 400 livres, 6 deniers to 180 livres, 6 deniers to 150 livres, 6 deniers to 12 livres, and finally 6 deniers to 3 livres for the *quine*.⁶⁰ (There were 12 deniers per sou and 20 sous per livre, so 6 deniers was half a sou.) Of course, as the combinations became more difficult to hit, the maximum wager was reduced in order to ensure that no large wager bankrupted the lottery. And indeed, if the Loterie de l'École Militaire's payout structure was "dazzling," as Casanova claimed, then the Royal Lottery's payout structure was downright mind boggling. The payout structure was as follows, again respectively from the *extrait* to the *quine*, and all numbers given are the amount paid times the player's wager: 15; 70; 270; 4,900; 5,200; 70,000; and finally 1,000,000 for the *quine*.⁶¹ [Image 4.3 shows a lottery ticket for the Royal Lottery.] Under the Loterie de l'École Militaire, a player's maximum payout was 5,200 times the wager, so that a one livre wager might possibly return 5,200 livres. But with the Royal Lottery, any lowly day laborer could wager just one livre and win a million livres in return—a sizeable sum even

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ Ibid., Plan de la Loterie. Article VII.

⁶¹ Ibid., Plan de la Loterie. Article VIII.

for the loftiest court noble. And indeed, even the minimum wager of a half sou, or six deniers, would mean a return of 25,000 livres.

Perhaps one of the most interesting aspects of the development of lotteries over the course of the eighteenth century was the simultaneous development of ever increasing potential prizes in relation to wagers along with decreasing minimum wagers. After all, the minimum wager for the *trois petites loteries* was originally 20 sous, or 1 livre, which was ultimately increased to 24 sous. Those ticket prices were affordable to many Parisians, but that was not an entirely inclusive price either. The Loterie de l'École Militaire on the other hand initially set its ticket price at just 12 sous, exactly half that of the *trois petites loteries*, but it then cut the price within the first year of its operation so that consumers could purchase the *ambe* and *terne* tickets for as low as just 3 sous. Considering that a loaf of bread cost 8 sous on average, a player could buy a lottery ticket for around a third of a loaf of bread. All but the most destitute of French men and women could afford that price. Finally, the Royal Lottery set yet a new low for ticket prices with a minimum wager of just 6 deniers, or half a sou. At just half a sou, a lottery ticket for the Royal Lottery cost roughly a sixteenth of a loaf of bread. Any Frenchman or woman who was able to nourish himself or herself could afford a ticket at that price.

The outlining of the new Royal Lottery served two purposes: to reassure consumers with a detailed bureaucratic structure meant to ensure the integrity of the lottery; and second, to entice consumers to play the lottery in the first place. It tried to squelch concerns about the viability of this unprecedented lottery by having an unprecedented surety. It was meant to answer concerns the consuming public might have had about payment of prizes. The drawings themselves would also be held publicly for

all to see. And secondly, the Royal Lottery did everything it could to entice players. It systematically lowered wagers and increased the potential prizes. It made the lottery both interesting and affordable. The French monarchy entered into the commercial lottery market with a competitive ideology and it did everything it could to expand that market. Indeed, every French subject who could afford to purchase a mere bite of bread could play the Royal Lottery. In all of these measures, the monarchy related to its subjects as consumers and it as merchant.

The Administration and Success of the Royal Lottery

The decree of 1776 defined the boundaries of the Royal Lottery, and in doing so, it redefined the boundaries of the whole French lottery system and its connection with the state. The decree thus acted as an ideological statement. It did, however, act as an administrative blueprint for the new lottery as well. In large part that administrative blueprint meant to portray an image of strength in order to reassure consumers just as the state portrayed itself as fiscally strong to reassure debt holders. But that blueprint and image of strength is a far cry from actual administration. How would it actually operate? How successful would it be? And perhaps most importantly, how strong of a bureaucracy and administration would it have?

We do not have precise records of the lottery's profits, but all indications are that the lottery was indeed very popular. Jacques-Louis Ménétra, a common Parisian glazier, mentions playing the lottery in such a nonchalant manner as to indicate that playing the Royal Lottery was a normal recreational activity for him and his fellow *compagnons*.

Ménétra even mentions winning 47 livres on one occasion when two of his numbers hit, and on another occasion he danced in the street when he thought all three of his numbers hit only to discover that the number drawn was 85 and not 84—the number on his ticket.⁶² And moralists like Louis-Sébastien Mercier attacked the Royal Lottery as being so successful that it was ruining countless French families.⁶³

These accounts are only anecdotal, but we do have records from the various published accounts of the state's budgets in the 1780s that do shed some light on the extent of the Royal Lottery's success. It is important to note that when referring to the Royal Lottery, I am referring to the Royal Lottery *régie*, which included the operation of the two remaining *petites loteries* as well as the much larger Royal Lottery. The various published accountings sometimes indicate the separate numbers for the two, but they generally do not. Either way, the vast majority of revenue came from the actual Royal Lottery. For example, in 1787 the Royal Lottery contributed almost 94% of the product of the *régie*.⁶⁴ Furthermore, when referring to the profit, unless otherwise stated, I am referring to the total amount taken in by the *régie* after paying winning lots; the five percent retained by the receivers; administrative expenses such as salaries, paper, and printing costs; and indemnities to the suppressed lotteries. In other words, I will use “profits” to indicate the total sum that went toward the state's general coffers from the *régie*. It is, however, worth noting that the charitable indemnities were significant and that the monarchy's profits, as defined here, do not reveal completely the amount of total profit.

⁶² Jacques-Louis Ménétra, *Journal of My Life*, translated by Arthur Goldhammer (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986), 190-192.

⁶³ Louis-Sébastien Mercier, *Tableau de Paris*, 12 vols. (Amsterdam, 1782), 3: 241-244.

⁶⁴ For the 1787 numbers, see Charles-Joseph Mathon de la Cour, ed., *Collection de comptes rendus, pièces authentiques, états et tableaux concernant les finances de France* (Lausanne, 1788), 196.

Published records reveal that the Royal Lottery was a great success, and furthermore, that the lottery market continued to grow as it had for most of the middle decades of the eighteenth century. In Necker's *Compte rendu* of 1781, he lists the lottery's net profit, after all expenses, as 7,000,000 livres.⁶⁵ Of course, Necker's accounting came under heavy scrutiny for its lack of accuracy—not just as it relates to the lottery but also to the entirety of the state budget.⁶⁶ Calonne in particular publicly refuted many of Necker's numbers. He placed the Royal Lottery's net profit for 1781 at only 6,046,000 livres.⁶⁷ Calonne's number is most likely more accurate than Necker's, but it also makes the lottery's growth seem even more prodigious. In a printed statement of the state's finances in 1783, Joly de Fleury lists the lottery's net profits as 7,246,000 livres—a 20% increase in just two years (using Calonne's number).⁶⁸ While he may be problematic, Necker is the only source of information we have for 1785, and he lists the net profit as 9,100,000 livres.⁶⁹ Necker's number for 1785 is believable enough since a published listing of the state's finances presented to the Assembly of Notables listed the Royal Lottery's net profit for 1787 as 9,600,000 livres.⁷⁰ Furthermore, we have archival evidence that lists the lottery's profits for 1788 as 10,734,077 livres, and amazingly, the profits from May 1, 1789 to April 30, 1790 were 12,820,855 livres.⁷¹ Even in the first year of the turmoil of the French Revolution, the Royal Lottery had its most profitable year to date. In 1791, the lottery quickly began to decline as the Revolution spiraled out

⁶⁵ Jacques Necker, *Oeuvres de Mr. Necker, contenant Compte rendu au Roi.—Mémoire sur l'établissement des administrations provinciales.—De l'administration des finances de la France*. (London, 1785), 103.

⁶⁶ For a thorough discussion of the *Compte rendu*, see Harris, *Necker: Reform Statesman*, 217-235.

⁶⁷ Mathon de la Cour, *Collection de comptes rendus*, 182.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 188.

⁶⁹ Necker, *Oeuvres de Mr. Necker*, 256-257.

⁷⁰ Mathon de la Cour, *Collection de comptes rendus*, 196.

⁷¹ AN, D X 2, "Loterie Royale. Son Administration – Traitement, Gratifications, Pension, & etc." Also, see Jean Leonnet, *Les loteries d'état en France aux XVIIIe et XIXe siècles* (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1963), 26.

of control and uncertainty spread.⁷² But by all accounts up until 1791, the Royal Lottery was a spectacular success. Indeed, its profits more than doubled from just over 6,000,000 livres in 1781 (Calonne's number) to almost 13,000,000 livres in 1789-90.

With such profits and such rapid growth came the need for a large bureaucracy to administer such an organization, which was, after all, a national undertaking. In his discussion of reforms in state finance in his *Compte Rendu* of 1781, Necker discussed the need to improve "order and economy" across the state's fiscal operations. He made a point of singling out the "administration of the lotteries" as a particular example of sound administration.⁷³ The Royal Lottery *régie* had indeed become a massive bureaucracy centered in Paris with hundreds of employees, its influence radiating outward across France. Of course, the Royal Lottery benefited from nearly half a century of experience with permanent lotteries, not to mention the two decades of experience from the Loterie de l'École Militaire, which was also a national lottery. Indeed, the Royal Lottery retained many of the employees from that lottery.⁷⁴ Lotteries had come a long way since Voltaire made his fortune on a statistical miscalculation or Casanova had to convince officials that the Loterie de l'École Militaire would not bankrupt the state. In a French fiscal administration which Necker himself attacked for weakness and inefficiency, the administration of the Royal Lottery stood out for its strength and efficiency.

Most of the documents that outline the actual administration of the lottery are dated sometime in August of 1789. These documents were drawn up as part of the overall process of the monarchy's forced taking stock of its fiscal situation in the period from 1787 to 1789 with the convening of the Assembly of Notables and then the Estates

⁷² Leonnet, *Les loteries d'état en France*, 26.

⁷³ Necker, *Oeuvres de Mr. Necker*, 44-45.

⁷⁴ Leonnet, *Les loteries d'état en France*, 25.

General. That is, of course, after thirteen years of growth and likely when the lottery was at its peak in terms of both ticket sales and administrative size. The Royal Lottery *régie* had become a large bureaucracy with its headquarters on the rue Neuve-des-Petits-Champs in the building that used to be occupied by the Compagnie des Indes.⁷⁵ From that building, the *régie* oversaw a total of 367 employees across France, and that does not include the *administrateurs généraux*, the receivers, or the *colporteurs*—none of whom were considered outright employees since they did not receive a direct salary from the lottery itself. For each separate office, there was a head official who went by a different title depending upon the particular office. Most division heads went by the title of director, but there was some variation as the head of the department of *Contrôle des recettes et Inspection de Paris* went by the title of *Contrôleur*. There were many variations, but the standard office hierarchy consisted of, in order of rank from top down, the director, a *chef*, one or more *premier commis*, one or more *principal commis*, numerous *commis*, numerous *surintendant*, and most offices had at least one *garçon de bureau*.⁷⁶ These positions, ranks, and titles correspond closely to the administration of the General Farms.⁷⁷ Depending upon the duties of the particular office, there might also be inspectors, printers, and other specialized positions. Just as all the various offices had a fairly standardized set of positions and ranks, so too were the salaries of the various bureaucrats. The annual salaries for the officials listed above were respectively: 5,000 livres; 3,000 livres; 1,800 livres; 1,600 livres; 1,200 livres; 600 livres; and 800 livres for a *garçon de bureau*—again, these salary grades were consistent with the bureaucracy of

⁷⁵ Ibid., 24-25.

⁷⁶ AN, D X 2, *Loterie Royale de France. Etat nominatif des employés attachés à l'administration de la Loterie Royale de France*.

⁷⁷ Mousnier, *The Institutions of France under the Absolute Monarchy, 1598-1789, Volume II*, 447-450.

the General Farms. The total pay for all 367 regular employees came to a grand total of 529,182 livres.⁷⁸

The majority of the lottery's employees worked in its headquarters in Paris, but a significant percentage worked in the provinces, demonstrating the extent to which the Royal Lottery had become a truly national lottery. There was of course the main office in Paris, but there were four provincial offices spread throughout France geographically. There was one office each in Lyon in the southeast, Bordeaux in the southwest, Strasbourg in the east, and Lille in the north. The five offices of the Royal Lottery squarely covered the geography of the kingdom. It is worth noting that royal officials, as already stated, were deeply concerned with foreign competition particularly from the German and Dutch lotteries to the east and north. That the Lille office was in the far north and the Strasbourg office was in the far east seems more than coincidental. Both offices were strategically placed to compete directly with foreign lotteries and to monitor closely foreign lottery activity in French territory, especially the Dutch and German lotteries.

The five offices—Paris, Lyon, Bordeaux, Lille, and Strasbourg—were each responsible for their own operations within their regional jurisdiction but still under central control and scrutiny from the Paris headquarters. Each office had its own drawing and consumers could only purchase tickets for the drawing within their regional jurisdiction. In other words, Parisians could not buy tickets for the Lyon drawing and the Lyonnais could not buy tickets for the Paris drawing.⁷⁹ But the regional offices did more

⁷⁸ AN, D X 2, *Loterie Royale de France. Etat nominatif des employés attachés à l'administration de la Loterie Royale de France*. For salaries of the employees of the General Farms, see Mousnier, *Institutions of France under the Absolute Monarchy*, 447-450.

⁷⁹ Leonnet, *Les loteries d'état en France*, 25.

than simply cover territory, they genuinely carried their own weight in producing revenue. Using the number of employees, the total salaries of those employees, and even the number of printers employed by each office, we have some idea how successful each jurisdictional office was relative to the whole *régie*. In discussing the Royal Lottery, Necker pointed out that Lyon had the second highest revenue after Paris.⁸⁰ And the office in Lyon did have the most employees with 53 and total salaries of 72,745 livres. The other three offices were very similar in size with between 25 and 27 employees for each office and total salaries of around 44,000 livres to 46,000 livres for each office. The four provincial offices combined had a total of 130 of the lottery's 367 employees.⁸¹ With 35% of all lottery employees located outside of Paris, it is fair to say that a significant portion of total lottery sales came from outside of the Paris region.

The number of printers employed at each office will also give us an idea of just how successful the provincial offices were. Presumably, each printer whether working in Paris or the provinces would have been equally productive so that each printer produced a roughly equal unit of tickets. There were 61 printers employed in Paris. The Lyon office employed 20 printers, Bordeaux 11, Lille 9, and Strasbourg 9 as well.⁸² The Royal Lottery employed a total of 110 printers to print tickets and the affiches to advertise the winning numbers. Of those 110, a full 49, or 45%, were outside of Paris. So in all likelihood almost half of lottery ticket sales came from outside the Paris region. Necker made the point that the lottery revenues came mainly from Paris.⁸³ On the other hand, a significant portion did come from across France. This is really quite astounding when we

⁸⁰ Necker, *Oeuvres de Mr. Necker*, 346.

⁸¹ AN, D X 2, *Loterie Royale de France. Etat nominatif des employés attachés à l'administration de la Loterie Royale de France*.

⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ Necker, *Oeuvres de Mr. Necker*, 290.

consider the fact that until 1757, lotteries had been almost exclusively a Parisian phenomenon. By 1789, the lottery system under the direction of the Royal Lottery *régie* had truly become a national phenomenon.

The 1789 documents also give us a much better picture of how the lottery operated on a monthly and annual basis since the documents give a fairly complete picture of the annual expenses of the lottery. By 1789, the Royal Lottery had what we might refer to as annual entitlement payments of 1,540,609 livres. The vast majority of that money was earmarked for indemnities to the foundations of the lotteries suppressed in 1776. In fact, they received 1,175,439 livres a year. The groups supported by the Loterie de Piété received almost half of it with 505,552 livres; the communities previously supported by the Loterie des Communautés Religieuses received 189,524 livres; those supported by the Loterie Général received 265,363 livres; and finally, the Hôpital des Enfants Trouvés received 215,000 livres. For clarity's sake, it is necessary to point out that the 2,000,000 livres indemnity for the École Militaire ended in 1787, since that was the year that the Loterie de l'École Militaire was set to expire. Most of the entitlements were relatively small. In fact, the only other two line items that were more than 50,000 livres a year were aid provided for the indigent nobility, which consisted of 150,000 livres a year, and then retirement pensions, which consisted of 94,920 livres a year.⁸⁴ The lottery had lasted long enough in just thirteen years of operation to pay out pensions to 113 former employees. Pensions ranged from 150 livres a year to 6,000 livres a year, though the vast majority collected a pension of between 300 and 1,200

⁸⁴ AN, D X 2. *Loterie Royale de France. Paiemens assignés sur la Caisse de la Loterie à la décharge du Trésor Royal.*

livres.⁸⁵ Most of the rest of the line items were indemnities to particular individuals for just a few thousand livres.

Those “entitlement” payments, though significant annual indemnities, were not considered regular expenses. Considering the lottery took in a total product of 44.5 million livres in 1789 with a total net profit of 12 million livres, the administration of the lottery ran fairly efficiently. In fact, in a list of annual expenses certified by the administrators of the lottery on August 16, 1789, the Royal Lottery claimed annual expenses of only 2,302,814 livres. Of that amount, four line items accounted for 2,039,182 livres. The largest single item were expenses for sending packages and letters via the post—a princely sum of 780,000 livres a year. The next largest item was interest on deposits. After all, the *administrateurs généraux* were required to deposit 300,000 livres to hold their positions. There were recorded deposits of 10,800,000 livres earning interest at five percent that came to a total interest expense of 540,000 livres per year for the lottery administration. Then there was the employee salaries totaling 529,182 livres. And the last major expense was the salaries of the *administrateurs généraux* and the *receveur générale*. By 1789, there were five administrators and a *receveur générale*. Together they received a total payment package of 160,000 livres per year. That broke down to 25,000 livres per administrator per year and 35,000 livres paid to the *receveur générale*.⁸⁶

A few things are clear in examining the actual operation of the Royal Lottery. First, it was indeed very successful with its profits for the state’s coffers nearly doubling

⁸⁵ AN, D X 2. *Loterie Royale de france. État Général des Emploïés de la Loterie Royale de France qui se sont retirés avec Pensions.*

⁸⁶ AN, D X 2. *Loterie Royale de france. Frais de Régie de l’administration de la Loterie Royale de france et intérêts des fonds d’advance et cautionnemens.*

in just fifteen years. It also maintained a strong and sophisticated centralized administration centered in Paris. The monarchy had near complete control of all facets of the lottery's administration from Paris down to small frontier towns. While the state ideologically defined the lottery as a point of weakness within absolutism, the actual operation of the lottery revealed an underlying administrative strength within the Old Regime monarchy.

Conclusion

The Royal Lottery was born out of the deeply contentious politics at the end of Louis XV's and the beginning of Louis XVI's reign. Some of the most heated debates were over taxation as the monarchy sought to exert more taxation revenue while circumventing traditional Old Regime institutions. The monarchy's opponents leveled, effectively, charges of arbitrary action and despotism. Turgot's attempts at reforms were a political disaster as he fell under those exact same charges of arbitrary despotism. The founding of the Royal Lottery, after Turgot's fall, represented a new direction in public finance as well as French politics. This was highlighted by the rise to power of Necker at the head of French finances. By relying on public credit for the monarchy's operations and financing, Necker made the king dependent on his subjects like never before. Necker's turned public finance away from coercive, and unpopular, measures of taxation and toward public credit, confidence, and opinion.

Though the Royal Lottery was founded just before Necker became finance minister, he nonetheless supported it, and the lottery became closely associated with

Necker and his idea of public finance and politics. In the 1780s, after Necker had left office but before the Revolution, moralists had begun to attack the Royal Lottery as exploitive. Necker acknowledged this growing anti-lottery sentiment. He argued, however, that the lottery was simply too large to replace its revenue source easily. And indeed, it was the ease of collection that was the most attractive aspect of the lottery: “This type of tax is extremely seductive for the fisc, because one submits to it voluntarily; and because it is primarily the inhabitants of the capital who pay it. They would hardly take well its [the Royal Lottery’s] replacement with a *capitation*, or by some *droits d’entrée*.”⁸⁷ As Necker saw it, the lottery was a voluntary form of revenue. While there may have been dissent from moralists, the actual players contributing the funds did so readily and without complaint. The lottery was politically viable because it seemed immune to charge of coercion, arbitrariness, and despotism from the people actually contributing the money. Replacing the lottery with new taxation on Parisians would simply set off a political firestorm among the public much like under Louis XV. It was easier to conform to the public’s desire and will of having a lottery than going against their will by instituting new taxes. Either way, it was the government that was conforming to the political will of the Parisian public and not the Parisian public conforming to the political will of the monarchy.

This chapter has focused primarily on the Royal Lottery from the monarchy’s perspective. Many social observers, moralists, and political opponents of the Royal Lottery would attack it as undermining the moral authority of the state for various reasons, which the next chapter will explore. But from the monarchy’s political and

⁸⁷ Necker, *Oeuvres de Mr. Necker*, 290. “Ce genre d’impôt est extrêmement séduisant pour le fisc, parce qu’on s’y soumet volontairement: & comme ce sont principalement les habitants de la capitale qui le paient, ils ne prendroient guère à gré son remplacement par une capitation, ou par des droits d’entrée.”

financial point of view, it was merely conforming to the public's will, and to be sure, the state saw itself as at the mercy of the lottery ticket consuming public. This was a fundamentally altered ideological relationship in which the state recognized its own dependence on pleasing the lottery ticket consumer public. Rather than seeing the lottery as an exploitive, coercive arm of Old Regime monarchy, the monarchy saw the Royal Lottery as a powerful arm of a newly emboldened public which the monarchy was simply trying to harness as much as possible. So while public finance and the surrounding crisis caused major political turmoil within pamphlet literature and the parlement, it also reorganized the political relationship between the public and the state along a merchant/consumer paradigm as individuals chose to contribute revenue or not to the monarchy through the Royal Lottery. And the Old Regime state was well aware of this altered power relationship as the consuming public saw its rise to political prominence.



Image 4.1: Scene outside a receiver's office of the Royal Lottery (N.d., Musée Carnavalet, Paris).⁸⁸

⁸⁸ The Carnavalet lists this as *La loterie royale sous Louis XV*. This is misleading since the Royal Lottery was not founded until two years after Louis XV's death.

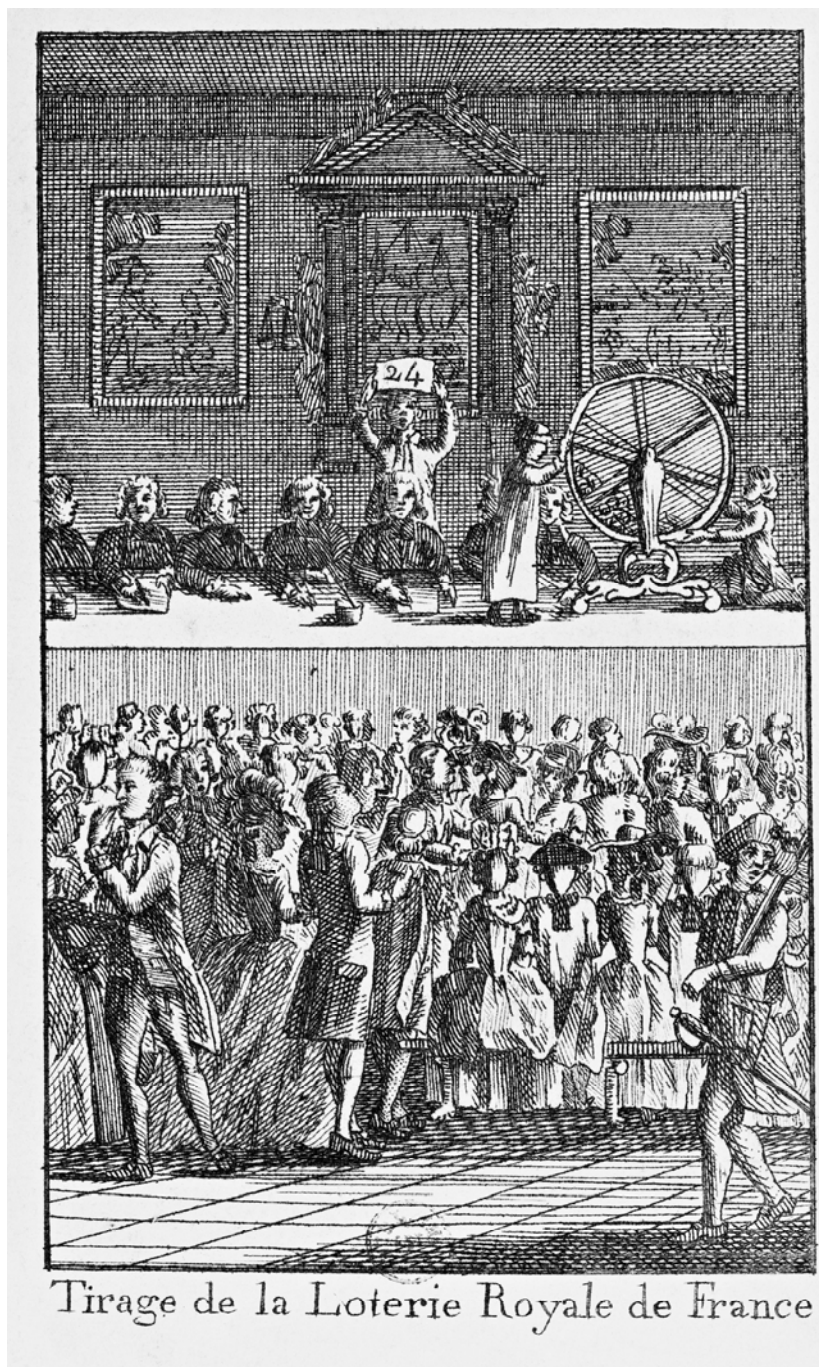


Image 4.2: *Tirage de la Loterie Royale de France*, (N.d., Cabinet des Éstampes, BN, Paris)

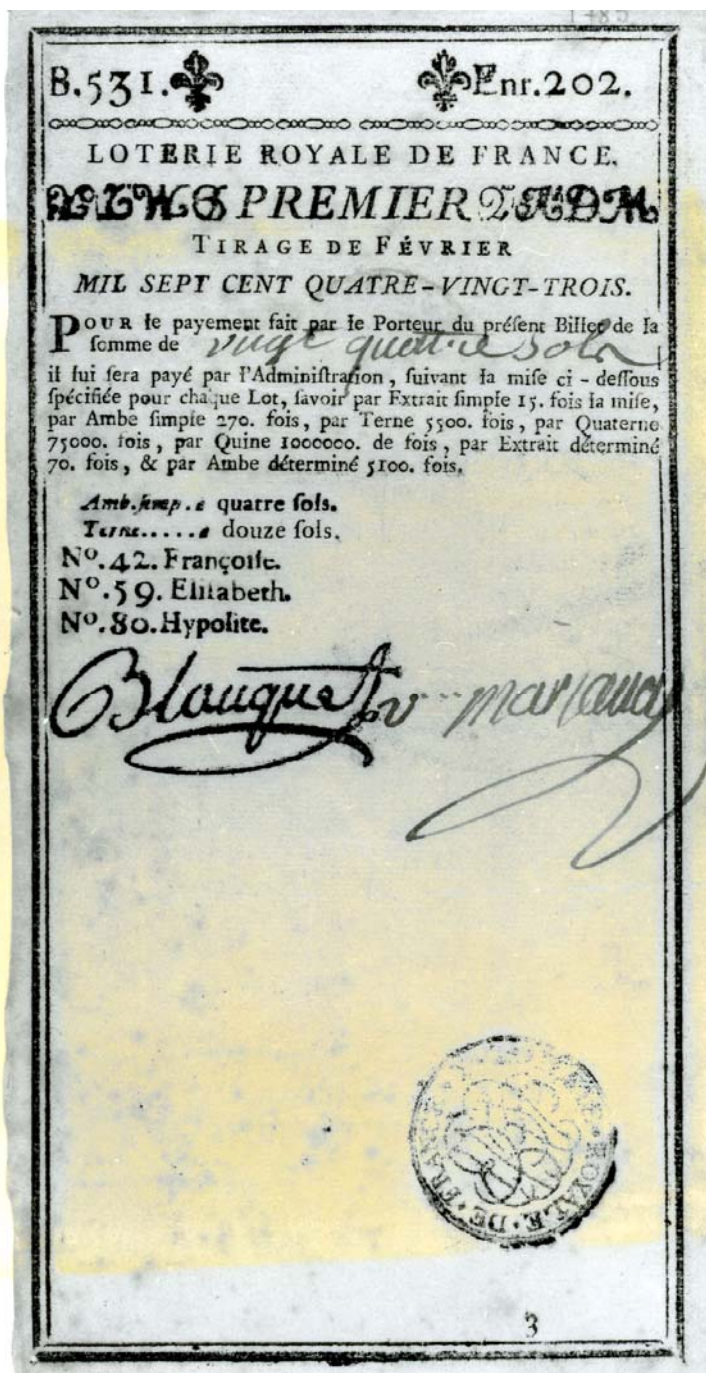


Image 4.3: Lottery ticket for the February 1783 drawing of the Loterie Royale de France, (1783, Musée Carnavalet, Paris).

Chapter 5:

The French Revolution and the Royal Lottery

In chapter 4, I discussed the Royal Lottery from the monarchy's perspective. From that point of view, the lottery was a liberal institution in almost every way. The monarchy depicted the Royal Lottery as an effort to engage in the economic free market in an attempt to compete openly with the ever pervasive foreign lotteries. The Royal Lottery represented a relinquishing of traditional coercive measures. The monarchy saw the lottery as a noncoercive and popular way to raise revenue that was in line with public opinion. The monarchy's narrative of the Royal Lottery was one of majestic concession to the consumer public.

During the French Revolution, the monarchy's narrative became hotly contested. This is a bit surprising. Many scholars now see the Revolution as the apotheosis of a new political culture which privileged the public. Indeed, many historians have posited the rise of this new political culture as the most significant aspect of the Revolution.¹ The revolutionaries advocated a political culture in which sovereignty ultimately lay in the nation. No government or its actions could be legitimate without the final consent of the

¹ See Keith Michael Baker, *Inventing the French Revolution: Essays on French Political Culture in the Eighteenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990); François Furet, *Interpreting the French Revolution*, translated by Elborg Forster (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981); and Lynn Hunt, *Politics, Culture, and Class in the French Revolution* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984).

public. Taxation is an interesting case in point. Even though French taxation was relatively light when compared to that of Great Britain, many attacked taxation under the French monarchy as inherently arbitrary, despotic, and more unfair than English taxation because of the lack of consent by the public.²

The Royal Lottery was a unique fiscal institution because under the Old Regime it was pushed as an institution of voluntary participation created as a result of consumer public opinion, yet it was widely seen as part of the Old Regime taxation system. As such, it came under heavy attack during the French Revolution as an agent of despotism and against the public. In essence, the French Revolution created a space in which these two deeply conflicting narratives of the Royal Lottery played out. It will be the goal of this chapter to explain how contemporaries tried to reconcile these conflicting discourses of the Royal Lottery and then to examine how successful, if at all, they were in reconciling those differences.

Financial Innovation, the Royal Lottery, and the Monarchy

Throughout the eighteenth century, France engaged in repeated warfare in Europe and the Atlantic world. The wars of the eighteenth century generally led to massive budget deficits which then led to larger and larger total debt loads carried by the French state. The story of rising debt and the subsequent interest payments on that debt has been

² See Peter Mathias and Patrick K. O'Brien, "Taxation in England and France, 1715-1810," *Journal of European Economic History* 5 (1976): 601-650; and for a thorough discussion of the politics of taxation in France, see Michael Kwass, *Privilege and the Politics of Taxation in Eighteenth-Century France: Liberté, Égalité, Fiscalité* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000).

told many times, and it does not need to be retold here.³ But it is worth pointing out that the monarchy's constant search for cash flow led to some fundamental financial innovations over the course of the century that escalated in the twenty years prior to the French Revolution. The monarchy did not always create the new financial instruments, but the combination of fiscal innovations, including the founding of the Royal Lottery in 1776, coupled with economies of scale never before known in France had unforeseen ramifications in the twenty years preceding the French Revolution. These financial innovations and the larger ramifications for finance were deeply unsettling to many in the French public. This general anxiety about these financial innovations and the role that the monarchy played in them underlay how contemporaries conceptualized the Royal Lottery.

As the debt of the French monarchy rose dramatically over the course of the eighteenth century, the structure of that debt changed significantly. Over the course of the century, the state's debt changed from primarily short-term debt obligations to long-term debt obligations. The long-term debt went from 58% of the state's total debt in 1715 to 78% of the total debt in 1789.⁴ Since long-term securities have a greater threat of inflation, economic fluctuation, and even political instability, they carry more intrinsic risk than shorter term obligations. The French state also had a history of bankruptcy—

³ For the fiscal crisis of the Old Regime see, Joël Félix, "The Financial Origins of the French Revolution," in Peter R. Campbell, ed., *The Origins of the French Revolution* (New York: Palgrave, 2006); Kathryn Norberg, "The French Fiscal Crisis of 1788 and the Financial Origins of the Revolution of 1789," in Philip T. Hoffman and Kathryn Norberg, eds., *Fiscal Crises, Liberty, and Representative Government, 1450-1789* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1994); Eugene Nelson White, "Was There a Solution to the Ancien Regime's Financial Dilemma?" *Journal of Economic History* 49 (1989): 545-568; François R. Velde and David Weir, "The Financial Market and Government Debt Policy in France, 1746-1793," *Journal of Economic History* 52 (1992): 1-39; and Philip T. Hoffman, Gilles Postel-Vinay, and Jean-Laurent Rosenthal, *Priceless Markets: The Political Economy of Credit in Paris, 1660-1870* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2000).

⁴ See, Hoffman, *Priceless Markets*, 96-113, especially Table 5.2.

often through forced renegotiation of loan terms. So the French state often had to pay a risk premium in order to get these long-term loans.⁵ As the French state borrowed more, its traditional means of borrowing simply became too expensive.

As the monarchy rapaciously sought out new credit, it had to bend to market, even international market, conditions and pay above the standard 5 percent interest rate in order to entice lenders.⁶ It also entered the free market by using new and innovative debt instruments. Its most popular form of borrowing became life annuities called *rentes viagères*. A creditor lent a lump sum to the monarchy in exchange for an annual payment for the duration of the life of a person stated in the policy—often a much younger third party. By 1789, these *rentes viagères* consisted of 31% of the state's total debt, up from only 1% in 1715.⁷ This type of loan became particularly popular toward the end of the Old Regime and many historians point to them as the cause of the fiscal crisis since they often carried interest rates well above the standard 5%. In fact, some historians have estimated that the average interest rate for these loans was close to 10%.⁸ *Rentes viagères* were popular because of their large returns, but they were also very controversial. Those who bought *rentes viagères* were attacked as inherently selfish and egotistical for surrendering their capital and ultimately the inheritance of the individual's heirs to the monarchy for a short-sighted gain that would only benefit the lender during his lifetime.⁹ The government's use of the *rentes viagères* thus came into direct conflict with traditional culture and mores that emphasized lineage family over the individual.

⁵ Félix, "The Financial Origins of the French Revolution," 5; Norberg, "The French Fiscal Crisis of 1788 and the Financial Origins of the Revolution of 1789," 254; George V. Taylor, "The Paris Bourse on the Eve of the Revolution, 1781-1789," *American Historical Review* 67 (1962): 965.

⁶ Hoffman, *Priceless Markets*, 18-20.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 100; and Velde and Weir, "The Financial Market and Government Debt Policy in France," 3.

⁸ Velde and Weir, "The Financial Market and Government Debt Policy in France," 3-4.

⁹ Taylor, "The Paris Bourse on the Eve of the Revolution," 960.

The monarchy turned to another financial innovation during the century: so-called lottery loans, which were meant to appeal to the gambling and speculative instincts of investors. Jacques Necker was particularly fond of using lottery loans to finance the American war, for which he notoriously refused to raise taxes or declare any kind of bankruptcy.¹⁰ The lottery loans were fairly simple. For example, in January 1777 a loan of 24 million livres was issued in the form of a lottery. 20,000 notes were sold at 1,200 livres each. The ultimate interest rate, and thus investor gain, would be determined by the drawing of lots. 15,000 of the notes would receive 4 percent interest, below the standard 5 percent interest and well below the rate being given on life annuities. The other 5,000 notes would be converted, again based upon the drawing of lots, into annuities at anywhere from 150 livres to 50,000 livres a year for the remainder of the holder's life. That amounted to an annual return of anywhere between 12.5 percent and 4,166 percent, for those lucky enough to draw the biggest prize. So every creditor was assured of at least a moderate return of 4 percent while others would strike it rich. These loans were very popular, and the January 1777 lottery loan was fully sold out within twenty-four hours.¹¹ The lottery loans were controversial as well, because they were clearly a mechanism to skirt traditional usury, for which the benchmark interest rate was 5%.¹² In order to gather the financial capital that it required, the monarchy had to offer terms above the 5% level to entice lenders. The *rentes viagères* and the lottery loans

¹⁰ François J. Bayard, Joël Félix, and Philippe Hamon, *Dictionnaire des surintendants et contrôleurs généraux des finances du XVI^e siècle à la Révolution française de 1789* (Paris, 2000), 183-188; also see, Robert D. Harris, *Necker: Reform Statesman of the Ancien Régime* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1979).

¹¹ Taylor, "The Paris Bourse on the Eve of the Revolution," 958; for lottery loans more generally, see Velde and Weir, "The Financial Market and Government Debt Policy in France," 26-36; Harris, *Necker: Reform Statesman of the Ancien Régime*, 123-126.

¹² Hoffman, *Priceless Markets*, 100; Velde and Weir, "The Financial Market and Government Debt Policy in France," 3.

were a way to get around the 5% mark, but as a result, the monarchy also opened itself up to charges of promoting usury.

Neither *rentes viagères* nor lottery loans were a particular novelty; they both dated back to the days of Louis XIV and his expensive wars. The novelty of Louis XVI's reign was the near total reliance on these two loan types. During Necker's time in charge of French finances, which went through most of the American war, the majority of loans taken out were in the form of life annuities, and most of the remainder of new debt under Necker was in the form of lottery loans.¹³ So while they were not new, reliance on those two loan forms was unprecedented. Perhaps even more importantly, they began to dominate French financial markets as well. Originally, life annuities could not be traded on the Paris Bourse after the individual upon whose life the annuity was written had been chosen, but after 1770, Genevan bankers created a system upon which they resold fractions of pools of French life annuities, which thus became easily sold as securities on the secondary market and specifically on the Paris Bourse. Likewise, lottery loan coupons for upcoming drawings were also sold on the Paris Bourse.¹⁴ Long-term French government debt securities regularly traded on the Bourse as well.

There was thus a symbiotic relationship between the massive expansion of government borrowing, the reliance on these new forms of borrowing, and the speculative boom of the 1780s on the Paris Bourse, which John Shovlin refers to as "the greatest episode of speculation seen in Paris since the days of John Law."¹⁵ As George Taylor points out, the combination of the formation of the Discount Bank (Caisse

¹³ Velde and Weir, "The Financial Market and Government Debt Policy in France," 26.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 28-36.

¹⁵ John Shovlin, *The Political Economy of Virtue: Luxury, Patriotism, and the Origins of the French Revolution* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2006), 157.

d'Escompte) in 1776 and the French entrance into the American war fueled speculation on the Paris Bourse.¹⁶ The Discount Bank was a private joint stock company that served as a massive clearing house for all sorts of bills of exchange. Its bank notes also circulated like currency.¹⁷ Meanwhile the American war led the French government to take on record amounts of debt. The massive amounts of new debt created by the war, now easily marketable and exchangeable thanks to the Discount Bank, led to an exponential growth in the new secondary market in government debt securities—not to mention the now marketable *rentes viagères* thanks to the Genevan bankers.¹⁸ These things all led to a surge in the sheer size of the secondary market, which itself changed the Paris Bourse in new ways. The economy of scale of the secondary market increased the profit potential for speculators in the 1780s to new heights. Speculators used margin buying, short selling, and false information to manipulate the markets up and down for their own benefit. Most of the securities being traded were in fact government securities, so the French monarchy, particularly under Charles Alexandre de Calonne's stewardship as Controller General, took a distinct interest in the Paris Bourse with the knowledge that extreme volatility on the stock market could have ramifications for the French monarchy, which was surviving on credit.¹⁹ The public also took an interest in the speculative boom of the 1780s as it grew concerned that the rampant speculation would undermine public morality as speculators pursued their own financial gain. Critics also blamed the

¹⁶ Taylor, "The Paris Bourse on the Eve of the Revolution," 956.

¹⁷ For the Discount Bank, see Arthur Donovan, *Antoine Lavoisier: Science, Administration, and Revolution* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 255-256; Charles Coulston Gillispie, *Science and Polity in France: The Revolutionary and Napoleonic Years* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004), 82-83; and Taylor, "The Paris Bourse on the Eve of the Revolution," 956-957 and 967-969.

¹⁸ Shovlin, *The Political Economy of Virtue*, 154-158; Velde and Weir, "The Financial Market and Government Debt Policy in France," 31-36.

¹⁹ Shovlin, *The Political Economy of Virtue*, 154-158; Taylor, "The Paris Bourse on the Eve of the Revolution," 951-952.

monarchy and its large borrowing for the rampant speculation. It did not help that Calonne had a bad reputation as being in cahoots with the speculators.²⁰ In short, the French monarchy was directly involved, and even implicated, in many of the financial speculations and financial innovations that elicited a great deal of public concern and anxiety.

The financial and speculative boom of the 1780s were closely associated with another financial innovation of the century that probably caused just as much anxiety among contemporaries: insurance. The boom coincided with a new fascination and interest in insurance of all types, from maritime insurance to life and fire insurance. Insurance companies often functioned as little more than investment trusts that traded publicly on the Paris Bourse, but even without being traded publicly, the buying of insurance itself was seen as a speculative gamble. Today, we tend to see insurance and gambling as antithetical. We associate insurance with prudent risk avoidance, while we associate gambling with imprudent risk seeking, but this is a cultural value that developed over the nineteenth century. People in the eighteenth century tended to lump gambling and insurance together. In fact, gamblers and insurers were often the same people. This was especially the case with life insurers. Life insurance in its earliest stages was little more than a random wager on a third party's life—often a celebrity or royal. So it was essentially meant as a wager on another person's life expectancy rather than as a protection for one's own family in the case of one's own untimely death. In this way, life insurance was seen as alienating one's estate from family members rather than safeguarding it. It was thus seen as selfish and counter-productive—very much like the *rentes viagères*. While many other forms of insurance were legal, life insurance was

²⁰ Shovlin, *The Political Economy of Virtue*, 153-157.

proscribed throughout most of Europe in the eighteenth century, notable exceptions being England and Holland. In fact, France would not legalize life insurance until 1788.²¹

Contemporaries closely associated insurance and gambling, but there was an even more direct association between lotteries and insurance, with a moral and cultural equivalence between them. As both insurance and lotteries seemed to be moving inexorably into the mainstream of French financial life, opponents sought to undermine and delegitimize both by linking the two. The very effort to delegitimize the two reveals just how much anxiety they created as the once marginal institutions of insurance and lotteries seemed to be gaining a foothold in public life. In his pamphlet denouncing a new fire insurance company which was to have an exclusive privilege, Jacques-Pierre Brissot de Warville directly linked insurance companies and lotteries as being of the same kind—that is, speculative vehicles with no real economic value and detrimental to public morals.²² He referred to the buyers of insurance as “*actionnaires*,” (“shareholders”) the same word that was commonly used in reference to lottery ticket holders, and of course, it also connotes speculation in the stock market. Explicitly linking the two, Brissot argued, that insurance “is in reality only a lottery, a bet made by the companies against the insured.” He attacked insurance as gambling akin to a lottery, but he also attacked the government for allowing it through a privilege just as it allowed lotteries. By allowing this privilege, the government was simply “opening a new game” and multiplying the number of “players.”²³ Just as critics blamed the monarchy for the

²¹ Lorraine Daston, *Classical Probability in the Enlightenment* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988), 163-178.

²² Shovlin, *The Political Economy of Virtue*, 168.

²³ Jacques-Pierre Brissot de Warville, *Dénociation au public d'un nouveau projet d'agiotage; ou, Lettre à M. le comte de S***. Sur un nouveau projet de compagnie d'assurance contre les incendies à Paris, sur ses inconvénients, & en général sur les inconvénients des compagnies par actions* (London, 1786), 27-28.

speculative boom of the 1780s taking place on the Paris Bourse, Brissot blamed the monarchy for the booming interest in insurance and lotteries.

In many ways, Brissot's comparison is fair. Lotteries and insurance do work in a somewhat similar manner. Both pool participants' (or "shareholders'") money together and then redistribute it to a few of those participants while the vast majority simply lose their money. And in both cases the intermediary figure, either the insurance company or the lottery operators, take a certain amount off the top to cover their expenses and make a profit. To many, this profit for pooling together participants' funds seemed to be nothing more than usury. However, contemporaries were not united behind Brissot's lumping of the lottery with insurance as mere speculation. The prospectus for a new life insurance company in the late 1780s made a point, perhaps with Brissot in mind, of distinguishing insurance from lotteries. It portrayed insurance as a prudent form of investment and savings for working people in direct comparison to spending their money on "the cabaret, the lotteries, shows, charlatans, or other useless things."²⁴ Insurance was a prudent financial investment while lotteries were wasteful spending. In the end, the primary difference between insurance and lotteries is motive. With insurance companies one puts a small amount of money in to guard against massive loss, while with lotteries one puts a small amount of money in for the hopes of massive gain. For our purposes, what matters most is that supporters and detractors of insurance both made their case by casting lotteries in a negative light. Brissot associated insurance with lotteries to delegitimize

"ouvrir un nouveau Jeu,"; "Ce n'est dans la réalité qu'une Loterie, qu'un pari fait par les Compagnies contre les assurées."

²⁴ *Prospectus de l'établissement des assurances sur la vie* (Paris, 1788), 15. "le cabaret, les loteries, les spectacles, les charlatans, ou quelques autres inutilités."

insurance, while the life insurance prospectus opposed insurance to lotteries to legitimize insurance.

In the two decades preceding the French Revolution, insurance, *rentes viagères*, securities trading in the Bourse boom, and lotteries were all linked in the popular imagination as vehicles of speculation, and as such not clearly differentiated from outright gambling. Just as Brissot made every effort to link insurance with lotteries, contemporaries also associated *rentes viagères* with lotteries and insurance. Louis-Sébastien Mercier referred to life annuities and tontines as nothing more than a “kind of lottery, by which one bets [*l’on jouoit à*] on life and death.”²⁵ Life annuities were just as questionable as lotteries because they risked money on an uncertain outcome, namely a long life. And all of these financial instruments were seen as morally questionable, at best, and inherently selfish pursuits by individuals who were alienating their estates against the greater interests of their family.²⁶ Mercier referred to this financial innovation as a “barbarous refinement which publicly consecrates egoism, which isolates citizens.”²⁷

These issues were not merely limited to one’s relation with one’s own family. There were also larger social issues. As John Shovlin has pointed out, much of the discourse around luxury in the eighteenth century dealt with the seeming contradiction between individual pursuit of material gain and public spiritedness.²⁸ After all, how could one think of the greater good of the body politic while pursuing one’s own

²⁵ Louis-Sébastien Mercier, *L’an deux mille quatre cent quarante. Réve s’il en fut jamais*, 3 vols. (N.p., 1787 [1786]), 2: 134. “espece de loterie, où l’on jouoit à la vie & la mort.”

²⁶ Taylor, “The Paris Bourse on the Eve of the Revolution,” 960.

²⁷ Mercier, *L’an deux mille quatre cent quarante* (1787 [1786]), 2: 134-135. “refinement barbare qui consacra publiquement l’égoïsme, qui isola les citoyens.”

²⁸ Shovlin, *The Political Economy of Virtue*, 5-8 and 15-19.

individual economic benefit? Egotistical pursuit of speculative concerns may well have been a social evil in pitting individuals against each other, but there was also the problem of the monarchy being involved in much of the speculative boom, broadly defined, in the 1770s and 1780s. In the popular imagination insurance, *rentes viagères*, stock speculation, and lotteries were all speculative activities that were all linked to the French monarchy—either through the government’s granting of privileges to insurance companies, the issuing of unprecedented amounts of *rentes viagères*, the massive expansion of government debt that fueled the Bourse boom, or the outright expropriation of the whole lottery system by the monarchy in the form of the Royal Lottery. The monarchy seemed to be the linchpin holding this speculative wheel of fortune together.

If people were concerned about speculation as promoting egoism over public spiritedness, many were absolutely horrified at the prospect of the monarchy promoting such activities. The Royal Lottery played a special role in this regard, because the monarchy itself directly operated the game. In his *De l’économie politique moderne*, Jean Herrenschwand made exactly this point when he referred to the Royal Lottery as a “loathsome game” which “poisons” the “spirit of citizens.” But what was perhaps most “loathsome” was the very fact that it was the king himself who was the nominal head of the Royal Lottery. In fact, “it is the king who has taken on the scandalous role of banker of the most horrible and unequal of all gambling games [*jeux d’hazard*].”²⁹ And Guillaume François Le Trosne, a fairly well-known physiocrat, asked how it was that “in every well-organized society [*société policée*], gambling is proscribed by law” and yet

²⁹ Jean Herrenschwand, *De l’économie politique moderne. Discours fondamental sur la population* (London, 1786), 389-390. “c’est à ce Roi, que vous avés laissé faire le scandaleux rôle de banquier du plus horrible & du plus inégal de tous les jeux d’hazard.”

the “head of society, who presides over public morals...invites citizens to play” the Royal Lottery.³⁰

Perhaps no moralist directly linked these issues of egoism, moneyed speculation, and the monarchy more closely than Mercier. In his rather underdeveloped musing, Mercier argued that the monarchy directly promoted morally questionable economics which in turn had negative social effects. According to him, the vast inequality in the city of Paris was due to the overtaking of agriculture by luxury and commerce, which he then traced back to the French monarchy under the influence of Colbert. It was Colbert “who began the misfortune, and I am fully justified by his institutions and those of his imitators. At the head of commerce and manufactures, Colbert sacrificed agriculture to them.” From Colbert on, the French state became obsessed with commerce, more concerned with money than agricultural goods and bread. This resulted in a monetary economy and led to the Law System, which was nothing more than “a public game.”³¹

From this monarchical obsession with money and finance came the French lottery system, culminating in the Royal Lottery. Mercier had a deep distrust of men of finance, but he especially loathed those who operated lotteries. Using terms that contemporaries found pejorative, Mercier argued that the “entrepreneurs” and “banquiers” of lotteries ran almost no risk while the players had very little chance for gain. “The entrepreneurs [who operate lotteries] know very well that their gain is immense and infallible; that the number who lose must surpass by a great deal those who win; that almost all the chances

³⁰ Guillaume François Le Trosne, *De l'administration provinciale, et de la réforme de l'impôt* (Basle, 1788 [1779]), 436. “dans toute société policée, les jeux de hasard, sont-ils pas proscrits par les loix;” “Chef de la société, à celui qui préside aux mœurs publiques...d’inviter les citoyens à y jouer.”

³¹ Louis-Sébastien Mercier, *Tableau de Paris*, 12 vols. (Amsterdam, 1782), 3: 250. “qui a commencé le mal, & je suis pleinement justifié par ses institutions & celles de ses imitateurs. Colbert à la tête du commerce & des manufactures, leur a sacrifié l’agriculture.”

are stacked in their favor.”³² The typical lottery operators were even more morally suspect than the average financier, who at least took on some reasonable risk; the Royal Lottery, with the king as its banker, was in yet another category of moral degeneracy altogether. With its more complex wagering system, most notably the addition of the *quine*, the Royal Lottery was “entirely to the advantage of the bankers.”³³ The *quine* was the grand prize that all players dreamed of winning with its payout of one million times the wager, yet according to contemporary accounts, only one player ever won the *quine*.³⁴ With only one winner of the *quine*, the odds of the Royal Lottery seemed even more stacked in the lottery’s favor than other lotteries. If lotteries were worse than other financial schemes and the Royal Lottery was the worst form of lottery, then the French monarch, as the head of the Royal Lottery, was the worst type of banker of a lottery.

In the end, Mercier condemned lotteries because they took advantage of the poor who played them out of despair and ignorance, while the lotteries took virtually no risk themselves. It was the disproportionate advantage that made the lotteries so offensive and led many contemporaries to see lotteries as predatory and those who ran them as predators. Because the Royal Lottery was run by the monarchy itself, it was the king himself who preyed upon his own people. For Mercier, the money collected by the Royal Lottery amounted to “odious conquests by the state on its citizens.”³⁵ Moneyed men and bankers put their individual interest above the public good. Likewise the king, by setting himself up as the banker of the Royal Lottery, had taken on a similar adversarial stance

³² Ibid., 3: 241. “Les entrepreneurs savent très-bien que leur gain est immense et infallible; que le nombre des perdans doit surpasser de beaucoup ceux qui gagnent.”

³³ Ibid., 3: 243-244. “toute à l’avantage des banquiers.”

³⁴ Marie-Joseph-Désiré Martin, *Étrennes financières* (Paris, 1789), note pp. 203-204.

³⁵ Mercier, *Tableau de Paris*, 3: 243. “conquêtes odieuses de l’état sur les citoyens.”

against his own subjects. Rather than relishing his paternalistic duties toward his own people, the French monarch had embraced the role of financial predator.

The Fiscal Crisis and Regeneration, 1787-1789

The whole of Louis XVI's reign was a time of anxiety over financial innovation, speculation, and the role the monarchy played in those matters. In short, there was a general distrust toward, and lack of confidence in, the monarch when it came to economic and fiscal matters. It was within this context, and in part because of this context, that France experienced the worst fiscal and political crisis of the eighteenth century in what many historians have come to call the "pre-Revolution." The Royal Lottery was both emblematic of the lack of confidence in the monarchy and a driving force behind it.

The roots of the fiscal crisis went back to France's involvement in the American war. Necker financed the war largely through expensive, high-interest lottery loans and *rentes viagères*. The full, devastating effect of these loans came to fruition under Calonne's administration as Controller General in the mid-1780s. Calonne engaged in a policy of duplicity and deception. He encouraged lavish spending in order to gain public confidence in the state's credit, since lenders would then assume that the state's finances were in good order. The perversity of this logic would ultimately doom his career. In August 1786, he finally admitted to the king that the state's finances were in a desperate situation and that a massive new program of loans and taxes was needed. Rather than deal with a recalcitrant Parlement of Paris, the monarchy decided to call an Assembly of Notables to approve this new and almost certainly unpopular program. The Assembly

met on February 22, 1787, but proved to be just as recalcitrant as the Parlement. In large part, its qualms were based upon distrust of Calonne and by extension the monarch. Calonne had only months earlier been spending large amounts of money and indicating to all that the state's finances were fine. Many of the Notables assumed that Calonne had simply lied to them all along.³⁶ His reputation as a speculator and rumors of his manipulations of the financial markets did not help his cause.³⁷

When confidence in Calonne finally collapsed he was replaced by Étienne Charles Loménie de Brienne, who had been one of Calonne's harshest critics. Brienne soon realized that the situation was indeed as catastrophic as Calonne had claimed, and he pushed for reforms similar to the ones proposed by Calonne. The Assembly of Notables was a complete disaster for the government. Arguing that it had no power to authorize new taxes, the Notables disbanded in May of 1787. The monarchy then went into arduous debate with the Parlement, but the parlementaires also deferred their taxation authority to another institution: the Estates General. The Parlement and government finally worked out a compromise that called for some temporary new taxes that would expire in 1792, at which time an Estates General would be called to address permanent reforms and taxation. The political situation seemed to be improving, but the fiscal situation continued to deteriorate as the deficits grew. The state had dealt with massive deficits before by borrowing large sums of money. The difference in 1788 was that lenders no longer trusted the government to handle its own finances, and as such, they were no longer willing to lend. Brienne was finally forced to suspend all treasury payments on August 16, 1788 and shortly thereafter he called for the Estates General to

³⁶ Florin Aftalion, *The French Revolution: An Economic Interpretation*, translated by Martin Thom (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 23-27.

³⁷ Shovlin, *The Political Economy of Virtue*, 154-159.

meet on May 1, 1789 in order to restore confidence and order to public finances. Brienne was removed and Necker recalled as the only person the public trusted so that the state could once again borrow money for its operations.³⁸

The Estates General was to meet on May 1, 1789 for the first time since 1614. In the meantime, throughout France members of the three estates went about electing members to represent them and drawing up *cahiers de doléances* to guide their electors on what exactly their concerns were. From the government's perspective, the various bodies would have a very limited scope and mandate, but those who met to draw up their grievances took the idea of regeneration very differently. For them, the dire state of French finances had a direct and corresponding relationship to the moral degeneration of French politics, with the king at the center. The state of the French fisc was simply emblematic of the moral state of French politics—that is to say, in decline.³⁹ There was thus a dual and contested meaning as to what exactly the role of the Estates General was and should be.

The discussion of the Royal Lottery in the *cahiers de doléances* as well as the explosion of pamphlets published during the run up to May 1, 1789 reflect the divergent meanings of the Estates General. From the monarch's view, the Estates General's purpose was simply to increase revenue for the state, and as such, the lottery should not have been an issue. After all, the Royal Lottery was bringing money into the coffers at a time of fiscal crisis. The lottery brought in almost 11 million livres in 1788 and sales for 1789 were on pace to set new records.⁴⁰ Even some of those predisposed against the

³⁸ Aftalion, *The French Revolution: An Economic Interpretation*, 27-30.

³⁹ Félix, "The Financial Origins of the French Revolution," 36-37.

⁴⁰ Jean Leonnet, *Les Loteries d'état en France au XVIIIe et XIXe siècles* (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1963), 26; these numbers are also in Archives nationales, D X 2.

lottery seemed to justify it simply by its fiscal significance. As one writer hostile to the Royal Lottery claimed, “this part of the public revenue is only able to be excused by the size of its revenues...It is then useful, [and] it is perhaps necessary to keep the lotteries.”⁴¹

Despite the serious fiscal crisis, many of the *cahiers* and pamphlets of 1789 called for the suppression of the Royal Lottery. For many of the *cahiers*, the suppression of the Royal Lottery was an important part in the moral and political regeneration of France, which was ultimately necessary for fiscal regeneration. For example, the *cahier* from the Third Estate of Paris reminded the members meeting at Versailles that their responsibilities were as much moral as fiscal. Casting the assembly’s role as broad and general as possible, the *cahier* noted that “the Estates General should take into consideration the means of bringing about the reform and restoration of morals.” As part of this moral regeneration, the *cahier* called for the suppression of the Royal Lottery as well as all other lotteries and gambling, since these things were “contrary to good morals and fatal to all classes of society.”⁴²

If there was disagreement about whether or not the Estates General’s purpose was primarily moral or fiscal, there was an emerging consensus among all three orders of society that taxes were only legitimate with the consent of the nation—as represented by the Estates General. Taxes and their collection had regularly been depicted as arbitrary

⁴¹ Guillaume-François de Mahy Corméré, *Mémoire sur les finances et sur le crédit, pour servir de faite aux recherches & considerations nouvelles sur les finances* (Paris, 1789), 97-98. “Cette partie du revenue public ne peut être excusée que par l’importance de son produit...Il est donc utile, il est peut-être nécessaire de conserver les Loteries.”

⁴² *Cahier du Tiers-État de la ville de Paris* (Paris, 1789), 49. “contraires aux bonnes moeurs, & funestes à toutes les classes de la Société.”; “Les Etats-Généraux prendront en considération les moyens d’opérer la réforme & la restauration des moeurs.” For other printed *cahiers* that call for the suppression of the Royal Lottery, see *Cahier des citoyens nobles de la ville de Paris...* (Paris, 1789), 13; *Cahier de l’ordre de la noblesse du bailliage de Troyes...* (N.p., 1789), 28; *Cahier d’un Capucin* (N.p., 1789), 15; *Cahier de doléances et remonstrances du clergé de Paris* (Paris, 1789), 13.

under the Old Regime because of the lack of participation and ultimate consent of the nation.⁴³ The Estates General was meant to rectify this situation by legitimating any new taxes. The Royal Lottery posed a unique problem within this intellectual paradigm. Many within the Old Regime distinguished between voluntary taxes and coercive taxes. While critics of the Old Regime attacked all taxes as arbitrary and coercive, supporters of the Old Regime tried to label as many taxes as possible “voluntary,” particularly indirect taxes on consumables. This was an obvious attempt to mitigate the coercive and arbitrary nature of the taxes and ultimately make them more palatable. Most people agreed that the Royal Lottery belonged in the larger category of “tax” but whether it was voluntary or coercive was another matter. This debate as to whether lotteries were voluntary or coercive would remain a constant theme through the French Revolution and indeed became a critical issue.

The debate was not new to the French Revolution. Physiocrats tended to oppose lotteries in general and the Royal Lottery in particular as producing no real wealth, since they merely reallocated money rather than producing real economic prosperity, as agriculture did.⁴⁴ Both Dupont de Nemours and Condorcet noted that Turgot looked down upon lotteries as an inappropriate part of the taxation system.⁴⁵ The most adamant physiocratic opposition to the Royal Lottery came from the Comte de Mirabeau, who saw it as an involuntary tax. In a letter to Frederick William II published in 1787, Mirabeau discouraged Frederick from allowing a lottery in Prussia. To those who defended lotteries as a voluntary tax, Mirabeau responded incredulously, “a tax free and

⁴³ Michael Kwass, *Privilege and the Politics of Taxation in Eighteenth-Century France*, 280-282.

⁴⁴ Shovlin, *The Political Economy of Virtue*, 142-150.

⁴⁵ Pierre-Samuel Dupont de Nemours, *Mémoires sur la vie et les ouvrages de M. Turgot, ministre d'état* (Philadelphia, 1788 [1782]), 99-100; Condorcet, *Vie de Monsieur Turgot* (London, 1786), 123.

voluntary!...a tax!...What a tax!” He expressed wonder at those who could couple the language of liberty and taxation through government use of lotteries when those very lotteries were only played by the poor out of a false hope of fabulous wealth. It dumbfounded him that anyone could label it as a “free tax” when it fell only on the poor to the near complete exclusion of the well-off. This use of liberty was indeed a “strange liberty!”⁴⁶ This inequitable economic redistribution that lotteries produced from the poor to the government outweighed any sense of fairness that liberty tended to imply. For Mirabeau, any connection between liberty and lotteries was contradictory.

Mercier signifies this notion in his futuristic utopian novel *L'an deux mille quatre cent quarante* (*The Year 2440*). First published in 1771, Mercier's novel ran through at least twenty-five editions before the Revolution with some significant additions and revisions. The 1786 edition, in particular, underwent significant changes by Mercier, including his discussion of lotteries. With each new edition, the novel seemed to become even more popular, finally becoming one of the best selling clandestine texts of prerevolutionary France. It was also considered so subversive that Mercier did not accept responsibility for its authorship until 1791.⁴⁷ The novel follows a present character, a contemporary of the eighteenth century, who travels through time and compares his present, contemporary society to the future utopia that he discovers. Mercier's chapter titled “Taxes” was substantially the same in both the 1771 and 1786 editions. Although the Royal Lottery did not yet exist in 1771, Mercier's time traveler asks about the future's taxation system, including lotteries more generally. The future character, living in the

⁴⁶ Honoré-Gabriel de Riquetti de Mirabeau, *Lettre remise à Frédéric-Guillaume II, Roi regnant de Prusse* (Berlin, 1787), 29-30.

⁴⁷ Robert Darnton, *The Forbidden Best-Sellers of Pre-Revolutionary France* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1996), 115-136.

year 2440, responded that they did not have such lotteries, noting that “we do not abuse the credulous hope of men. We do not levy upon the indigent part of the citizenry a tax so cruelly ingenious. The wretched, tired by the present, could live only in the future, [and] carried the price of his sweat and spent the day at this fatal wheel always waiting on his fortune to be drawn.”⁴⁸ Mercier clearly considered the lottery a tax, but he in no way associated it with fairness or liberty as a voluntary tax—in fact, quite the opposite. Mercier also cleverly plays with the notion of time. His present character lives in a flawed society but is deeply preoccupied with the future and thus travels through time. Meanwhile the future character lives in a utopian society and is only concerned with the present to the point of chastising those who play the lottery as living “only in the future.” Mercier’s future character thus poignantly forces the contemporary reader’s attention back to the present situation in eighteenth-century France with the implicit suggestion that the reader stop dreaming of that future by the drawing of lots and instead address the real problems of this own time.

That present utopia would presumably be something like the fictional utopia of 2440, which is to say a future without a Royal Lottery. While Mercier could not have had the Royal Lottery in mind in 1771, he clearly did have it in mind by the time the heavily revised edition appeared in 1786.⁴⁹ Mercier did not refer to the Royal Lottery by name, but he did refer to its five-number wagering system, unique to the Royal Lottery. He also referred to the fact that the lottery funds went directly into the royal treasury,

⁴⁸ Mercier, *L’an deux mille quatre cent quarante* (1787 [1786]), 2: 123-124. “nous n’abusons point ainsi de l’espérance crédule des hommes. Nous ne levons pas sur la partie indigente des citoyens un impôt aussi cruellement ingénieux. Le misérable qui, fatigué du présent, ne pouvoit vivre que dans l’avenir, portoit le prix de ses sueurs & de ses veilles dans cette roue fatale d’où il attendoit toujours que la fortune devoit sortir.”

⁴⁹ For the different editions, see Darnton, *The Forbidden Best-Sellers of Pre-Revolutionary France*, 409 n. 3; and Everett C. Wilkie, “Mercier’s *L’An 2440*: Its Publishing History During the Author’s Lifetime,” *Harvard Library Bulletin* 32 (1984): 5-31 and 348-400.

again unique to the Royal Lottery. In the 1786 edition, he denounced the Royal Lottery even more strongly than he had the other lotteries of 1771 and called for the lottery's abolition.⁵⁰ Abolishing the Royal Lottery would, however, simply be a symbol of larger political changes for Mercier. The future utopia that Mercier dreamed of would be one in which the government did not exploit its citizens through "voluntary" taxes such as the lottery. After all, Mercier asks in reference to the Royal Lottery, "is it not a bad government that opens up the path to public disorder?" That is ultimately what the lottery does by pitting its "citizens against one another."⁵¹ As a part of the monarchy's fiscal and taxation system, the Royal Lottery was the very antithesis of public spiritedness, unity, and harmony. In short, it was the very epitome of egoism. To refer to the Royal Lottery as a voluntary tax was the worst sort of euphemism.

It was within this context of contention as to whether or not the Royal Lottery should be considered a voluntary tax that we must place the *cahiers de doléances* of 1789 and the numerous political pamphlets published during the run up to the Estates General. Many of the *cahiers* picked up on a long-standing eighteenth-century trope of depicting gambling as an irrational and compulsive passion [*"fureur"*] in which the gambler lost all control of himself and was completely at the mercy of the compulsion and those who would take advantage of it. Jean Dusaulx, a former compulsive gambler who would later become a member of the National Convention, took this trope to its height with two literary works published before the Revolution: *Lettre et réflexions sur le fureur du jeu*

⁵⁰ The discussion of the Royal Lottery is in the chapter "Du Commerce" in the 1786 edition. That same chapter contains no discussion of lotteries in the 1771 edition. For comparison, see Louis-Sébastien Mercier, *L'an deux mille quatre cent quarante. Réve s'il en fut jamais* (London, 1771), 359-366; and Mercier, *L'an deux mille quatre cent quarante* (1787 [1786]) 2: 125-136.

⁵¹ Mercier, *L'an deux mille quatre cent quarante* (1787 [1786]), 2: 135 note d. "N'est pas un mauvais gouvernement que de frayer le chemin au désordre public?"; "les citoyens les uns contre les autres."

(1775) and *De la passion du jeu* (1779). In these two works, Dusaulx, a devoted follower of the philosophes, attacked gambling for overthrowing rational judgment in favor of irrational hope. For him, gamblers were more like animals than rational beings capable of improvement that the Enlightenment so valued.⁵² As Thomas Kavanagh writes, “for Dusaulx, the gambler is a monster whose actions defy rational analysis because he has in fact lost any individual character he might properly call his own. Like a reeling derelict, the gambler lacking will, self-control, and any sense of purpose, becomes an empty space within the triumphant discourse of reason.”⁵³ The *cahiers* took up Dusaulx’s charge by calling for the suppression of all lotteries. The *cahiers* commonly refer to lotteries as being “seductive” and inciting “passion” and “delusional hope.” For example, the *cahier* from Vitry-le-François cited the lottery’s fatal “seductive lure,” and Mantes et Meulan argued that lotteries exalted “the imagination through hope” and created “a passion which had only a fanciful end.”⁵⁴ The *cahier* from the clergy of Paris called lotteries a seductive lure that inspired “*fureur*.”⁵⁵

The emphasis in the *cahiers* of 1789 on irrational *fureur* countered the monarchy’s claim of responding to the consumer public. From the monarchy’s perspective, the Royal Lottery was simply an institution engaging in the free market and responding to the public’s taste. The monarchy sought to minimize its own role in the whole matter and deflected agency onto the public. Future architect of the Terror Jacques Billaud-Varenne noted that the government “projects fault [for the establishment of the

⁵² John Dunkley, *Gambling: A Social and Moral Problem in France, 1685-1792* (Oxford: The Voltaire Foundation, 1985), 144-149.

⁵³ Thomas M. Kavanagh, *Enlightenment and the Shadows of Chance: The Novel and the Culture of Gambling in Eighteenth-Century France* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993), 36.

⁵⁴ Quoted in Louis Marie Prudhomme, *Résumé général; ou Extrait des cahiers....* 3 vols. (Paris, 1789), 1: 176-177.

⁵⁵ *Cahier de doléances et remontrances du clergé de Paris* (Paris, 1789), 13.

Royal Lottery] on the rampant taste of the public for this kind of game,” but he also noted that they could not pass the blame without blushing in shame.⁵⁶ By portraying gamblers as being at the mercy of the irrational compulsion of *fureur*, the pamphlets and *cahiers* were able to turn the tables on the monarchy. If gamblers lost control of themselves, then they were also at the mercy of those who would take advantage of their passion, in this case the monarchy. Rather than agency being located in the public, it was now placed fully on the monarchy. In short, the *cahiers de doléances* indicted the monarchy for its active role in the Royal Lottery.

The most thorough indictment of the Royal Lottery was in the *cahier* from the baillage de Nemours, from which the famed Pierre-Samuel Dupont de Nemours came—an ardent physiocrat and close ally of Turgot.⁵⁷ The Nemours *cahier* did not simply attack the Royal Lottery; it attacked the monarchy as a whole through the Royal Lottery. The *cahier* used the common trope of *fureur* by referring to lotteries as nothing more than “seduction.” That the bankers of lotteries would take advantage of this *fureur* and seduction made them worthy of contempt. “Of all the vile professions, the most vile is the one which is founded on an assured gain on the seductions of the most base passion,” the author declared. The *cahier* even refers to *fureur* as a “satanic wickedness.”⁵⁸ This powerful, even satanic, compulsion drives individuals to risk their very humanity for financial gain. The author gives the example of two people who start out perfectly equal and yet insist on risking this equality and harmony in order for one of them to gain an

⁵⁶ Jacques Nicolas Billaud-Varenne, *Despotisme des ministres de France...* 3 vols. (Amsterdam, 1789), 2: 206-207. “rejete la faute sur un goût effréné du Public pour cette espèce de jeu.”

⁵⁷ For a discussion of the close relationship between Dupont and Turgot, see Shovlin, *The Political Economy of Virtue*, 143-144; and Aftalion, *The French Revolution: An Economic Interpretation*, 200-203.

⁵⁸ Dupont de Nemours, *De la loterie*, the *cahier* is republished in this pamphlet (Paris, 1791), 6. “de tous les métiers vils, le plus vil est celui qui fonde un gain assuré sur les séductions de la passion la plus basse.”

advantage over the other. This competition spirals downward into a bloody struggle for supremacy akin to the two saying, “let’s see which one of us two will drink the blood and devour the wife and children of the other.”⁵⁹ The gamblers become more like rabid animals caught in a death match than rational beings.

According to the Nemours *cahier*, lotteries turn otherwise rational people into rabid animals, but it was ultimately the bankers of lotteries who were condemned for preying upon people afflicted with this compulsion. And the predatory bankers of lotteries had all the odds stacked in their favor “in this horrible duel” in which the banker “combats armor-clad” against the “nude victim.”⁶⁰ The appearance of a duel was nothing more than an illusion which hid the reality of the powerful banker victimizing the “insane” players. Even worse, the king prohibited gambling demonstrating that he understood the evil he was committing in authorizing a state lottery. The *cahier* asks: “what should people think in seeing posted on the same pillar that Louis, *by grace of God*, proscribes in his parlement gambling [*les jeux de hasard*] because bankers have too much of an advantage over bettors; and then Louis, *by the grace of God*, declares himself in his *lettres patentes*, registered in the same parlement, the banker of the most unequal, the most seductive, and the most atrocious of all games?”⁶¹ The bankers of lotteries and other gambling games were nothing more than powerful brigands who took advantage of the weak. By noting that the king himself was now at the head of the Royal Lottery, the Nemours *cahier* condemns Louis XVI as a common brigand.

⁵⁹ Ibid., 6-7. “Voyons lequel de nous deux boira le sang & dévorera la femme & les enfans de l’autre.”

⁶⁰ Ibid., 7.

⁶¹ Ibid., 7-8. “que doit penser le peuple en voyant affiché, sur le même pilier, que LOUIS, *par la grace de Dieu*, proscriit en son parlement les jeux de hasard, où les banquiers ont trop d’avantage sure les ponteurs; & que LOUIS, *par la grace de Dieu*, se declare, en ses lettres-patentes enregistrées au même parlement, le banquier du plus inégal, du plus séducteur, & du plus atroce de tous ces jeux?”

The dramatic turn of the French Revolution on June 17, 1789 altered the nature of the discussion around taxation and the Royal Lottery. On that day, members of the Third Estate declared themselves a National Assembly and that sovereignty of the French nation resided in them. Before June 17, many in the public had argued for consent in matters of taxation, but on that day, the new National Assembly declared matters of taxation to be their prerogative alone. Their very first act as self-declared representatives of the nation was to declare unanimously that taxes, “not having been consented by the nation, are all illegal and are consequently null in their creation and expression.”⁶² But they also stipulated, “on behalf of the Nation that taxes and contributions, although illegally established and collected, should continue to be levied in the same manner as hitherto.”⁶³ The decree was thus not meant to have any practical effect on tax collection itself, yet almost immediately tax collections evaporated. People across France refused to pay their taxes; toll booths across France were vandalized and destroyed.⁶⁴ Taxes under the Old Regime had always been a point of protest. They were an example of arbitrary tyranny, because they were levied without the consent of the nation. By making their own claims of national legitimacy, the National Assembly sought to legitimize the collections of state revenue not undermine it.⁶⁵ And yet tax collection across France evaporated.

It is also worth noting that the decree mentioned nothing at all about the Royal Lottery. In the previous two years, critics of the monarchy had identified the lottery as a

⁶² Quoted in Kwass, *Privilege and the Politics of Taxation in Eighteenth-Century France*, 282.

⁶³ Quoted in Aftalion, *The French Revolution: An Economic Interpretation*, 51; for the decree of June 17, also see William Doyle, *The Oxford History of the French Revolution* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), 104-105.

⁶⁴ Aftalion, *The French Revolution: An Economic Interpretation*, 51-59; Doyle, *The Oxford History of the French Revolution*, 111-116.

⁶⁵ Aftalion, *The French Revolution: An Economic Interpretation*, 103-106; Kwass, *Privilege and the Politics of Taxation in Eighteenth-Century France*, 280-283.

form of taxation and ceaselessly attacked the monarchy for abusing its subjects through its operation. But with the Third Estate's declaration of sovereignty as the National Assembly some began to question this assumption. The new National Assembly had freed the public from the abuse of the monarchy. Freed from the threat of the lottery, one would expect lottery sales to have plunged. Yet ticket sales remained on the rise. The effect of the June 17 decree was the opposite of what had been expected: lottery sales increased as taxes plummeted. These effects led many to wonder anew about the Royal Lottery. If the lottery was indeed popular without the supposed coercion and abuse of the monarchy, then did that mean that it really was part of the public will and could then morally be used in the new future of French liberty? In short, was the Royal Lottery, like other taxes, legitimate if sanctioned directly by the nation? And more generally, could the Royal Lottery be used as a source of state revenue within the revolutionary context?

Could the Royal Lottery Be Made Revolutionary?

The attempt to wrest control of arbitrary taxation from the monarchy colored the discursive context of the Revolution, particularly the early phase. Consequently those same debates about taxation also colored much of the revolutionary discourse over the Royal Lottery. Being a revolutionary did not necessarily entail opposition to the Royal Lottery, although certainly as the Revolution went on open support of the lottery became more and more difficult to sustain politically. Whether they supported the lottery or opposed it, revolutionaries were compelled to place their position within the political discourse of the Revolution. Both opponents and proponents of the lottery defended their

positions within the political discourse of the Revolution, but in doing so, they often then had to exclude the other from the Revolution proper. Debating the lottery meant debating the very nature of the Revolution itself.

The first official call to abolish the Royal Lottery came late in 1789. On December 12, Charles-Maurice de Talleyrand-Périgord took to the floor of the National Assembly to call for the suppression of all lotteries throughout France and in particular the Royal Lottery.⁶⁶ Talleyrand's speech would become the defining, if inconclusive, statement made about the lottery which everyone from then on would have to address, whether in support of the lottery or in opposition to it. Talleyrand would seem an unlikely opponent to the Royal Lottery. He had a reputation as a worldly cleric, and he often partook in financial speculations as well as gambling.⁶⁷ But Talleyrand had something of a knack for dissociating public morals from private action. In fact, despite his reputation, December 1789 was not the first time Talleyrand had fought the Royal Lottery. He first lobbied for its suppression in 1780 at the beginning of his five-year term as Agent-General of the Clergy.⁶⁸ Indeed, his first major proposal in that position was nothing less than the abolition of the Royal Lottery. As one biographer interprets this action, it was an attempt by Talleyrand "to regain the public esteem that the clergy, under the hammerblows of the *philosophes*, were rapidly losing."⁶⁹ Essentially, Talleyrand proposed that the French church should buy the Royal Lottery and then shut it down. The church would then make up the state's lost income with a voluntary donation. As Talleyrand later stated in his memoirs, "I was eager...to hold up the clergy as the

⁶⁶ For the speech, see *Archives parlementaires de 1787 à 1860*, edited by M. J. Mavidal and M. E. Laurent, 82 vols. (Paris, 1879-1913), 10: 548-554 (hereafter cited as *AP*).

⁶⁷ J. F. Bernard, *Talleyrand: A Biography* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1973), 13, 54-55, 80-81, 94.

⁶⁸ Philip G. Dwyer, *Talleyrand* (London: Longman, 2002), 15-17.

⁶⁹ Bernard, *Talleyrand*, 49.

protectors of strict morality. And by inducing the clergy to accept some financial sacrifice in support of that principle, I should have rendered a service both to public morals and to the order to which I belonged.”⁷⁰ Though Talleyrand had a reputation as something of a degenerate, he nevertheless recognized the importance of “public morals” and the clergy’s role in protecting them.

Talleyrand’s proposal as Agent-General never gained any real support, yet with the opening stages of the French Revolution, Talleyrand returned to the matter of the Royal Lottery. Elected to represent the First Estate from Autun, Talleyrand was one of the early members of the clergy to join the National Assembly. He had also gained fame, or perhaps notoriety, by being the first to propose the nationalization of church lands on October 10, 1789. As an early cross-over cleric to the National Assembly and because of his October 10 proposal, Talleyrand took on the role of one of the leading revolutionary clerics and even presided over the Fête de la Fédération on July 14, 1790.⁷¹

It was in this role of dedicated revolutionary cleric that Talleyrand gave the Revolution’s most famous and thorough denunciation of the Royal Lottery before the members of the National Assembly on December 12. Talleyrand drew the line in the sand between the Revolution and the Royal Lottery, arguing that the lottery was antithetical to the values of the Revolution and had to be suppressed. He went so far as to claim that, “among the causes of this revolution, there is no doubt that the lottery [the Royal Lottery] should occupy one of the top ranks.”⁷² If as Talleyrand claimed, the Royal Lottery was one of the leading causes of the Revolution, then no political stability

⁷⁰ Quoted in Bernard, *Talleyrand*, 50; also see, *Mémoires du Prince de Talleyrand*, edited by Le Duc de Broglie (Paris, 1891), 52-53.

⁷¹ Bernard, *Talleyrand*, 73-94.

⁷² *AP*, 10: 552. “Parmi les causes de cette révolution, la loterie, n’en doutons point, doit occuper un des premiers rangs.”

could ensue until the lottery had in fact been suppressed. Unless it was abolished, the revolutionary regime would suffer the same fate as the monarchy.

In the opening of his speech, Talleyrand addressed the abuses of lotteries in general while never mentioning the Royal Lottery by name. But he soon turned to the Royal Lottery specifically as the very epitome of all that was wrong with lotteries generally. “In order to penetrate the revolting abuses of the lotteries,” he told the National Assembly, “in order to see at once all the tricks that they have invented, all the traps that they set for the credulity of the people, and all the disorders that follow from them, it is necessary to turn our eyes on the French Royal Lottery.” In particular, Talleyrand called attention to the word “royal” to emphasize, by contrast, its ignobility. “Never, perhaps, has any institution presented to the legislator so many signs of reprobation as this lottery, which, under the shelter of its noble name [*nom auguste*], seems to defy public censure.”⁷³ The Royal Lottery was the very pinnacle of abuse by the very nature of it being “Royal.”

By attaching itself to a lottery, the monarchy had fundamentally altered the traditional political relationship. In fact, the Royal Lottery had destabilized French politics in a way that Talleyrand found deeply unsettling. Drawing attention to the monarch’s role as father of the nation, Talleyrand stated: “And here is this lottery which remains shining, in the same place where the paternal supervision of the King has severely proscribed all gambling games of unequal chance!” By using lotteries for its own profit while simultaneously banning other games, the king’s hypocrisy was

⁷³ Ibid., 10: 549. “Pour se pénétrer des abus révoltants des loteries, pour bien concevoir à la fois toutes les ruses qu’elles ont inventées, tous les pièges qu’elles tendent à la crédulité du peuple, et tous les désordres qu’elles traînent à leur suite, il faut attacher ses regards sur la loterie royale de France.”; “Jamais, peut-être, aucune institution n’a présenté au législateur autant de signes de réprobation que cette loterie, qui, sous l’abri de son nom auguste, semble braver la censure publique.”

revealed.⁷⁴ Failing as a good father, the king had actually become the exploiter from whom the people had to be protected. In this particular case, Talleyrand stood up to protect the people from the king, and he called on the National Assembly to do the same.⁷⁵

One of Talleyrand's recurring themes was the inherent corruption of lotteries, which then in turn corrupted everything and everyone who touched them. Talleyrand referred back to the beginnings of the Royal Lottery with the Loterie de l'École Militaire. "Created under the name of a famous institution, it at first defrayed in part the costs of military education: and one saw a school made to inspire sentiments of honor, maintained from the profit of an institution that true honor condemned."⁷⁶ The École Militaire, meant to teach the highest ideals of honor and nobility, was tarnished by the lottery used to finance it. But the situation went from bad to worse: as the Loterie de l'École Militaire saw its profits soar it morphed into the Royal Lottery. With incredulous exasperation, Talleyrand noted that "when then its profits grew beyond all hope, then it passed entirely into the hands of the government: a game of chance became a branch of public revenue, and we got used to this strange metamorphosis, in persuading ourselves foolishly that the lottery should be seen as a free and voluntary tax."⁷⁷ Here Talleyrand used the broadest language yet to say that the problem of the monarchy was now the problem of the

⁷⁴ Ibid., 10: 550-551. "Et voilà cette loterie qui subsiste avec éclat, dans le meme lien où la surveillance paternelle du Roi a sévèrement proscrit tous les jeux de hasard à chances inégales!"

⁷⁵ For a discussion of the image of the king as father during the Revolution, see Lynn Hunt, *The Family Romance of the French Revolution* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992), 17-52.

⁷⁶ AP, 10: 550. "Créée sous le nom d'un établissement célèbre, elle fit d'abord en partie les frais de l'éducation militaire: et l'on vit une école faite pour inspirer des sentiments d'honneur, entretenue du produit d'une institution que le véritable honneur réprouvait."

⁷⁷ Ibid., 10: 550-551. "Lorsque ensuite ses bénéfices se furent accrus au delà de tout espérance, alors elle passa tout entière dans les mains du gouvernement : un jeu de hasard devint une branche de revenus publics, et l'on s'accoutuma à cette étrange métamorphose, en se persuadant follement que la loterie pouvait être regardée un impôt libre et volontaire."

National Assembly. By shifting to much more general terms such as “the government” and “a branch of public revenue,” Talleyrand condemned the monarchy and the Royal Lottery, but more important than the past were the present and the future. What, he seemed to be asking, should the current government do about the lottery? Referring to “ourselves,” Talleyrand pointed to the National Assembly to confront the moral problem of the Royal Lottery while at the same time pointing back to the fate of the monarchy as way of warning.

Talleyrand’s speech also had serious political implications. It is worth keeping in mind that his speech in December was given in the aftermath of the popular violence that spread throughout France during the summer and fall of 1789, from the Great Fear to the October Days. As a result of that popular violence, many deputies within the National Assembly had begun to question just how much popular political participation should be allowed.⁷⁸ Talleyrand clearly fell into the group that sought to limit popular involvement. He knew there would be opposition to suppression. One of the objections of those who opposed suppression, Talleyrand acknowledged, was that “the destruction of the lottery would infallibly excite the regrets of the multitude.” Openly acknowledging that such legislation would be unpopular, Talleyrand urged his fellow legislators to ignore such concerns. Regardless of what the public wanted, the Royal Lottery had to be suppressed, and the legislature had a responsibility not to abdicate its power to the people. It was the legislators who exercised reason, while the common masses were held in the throes of passion—in this case, the passion for the lottery. To listen to the multitude was, Talleyrand thundered to the legislature, nothing less than an

⁷⁸ Kwass, *Privilege and the Politics of Taxation in Eighteenth-Century France*, 307.

“overturning [*renversement*] of all reason!”⁷⁹ By using the word “overturn,” Talleyrand called to the attention of the self-declared legislators their own potential hypocrisy in overturning the Old Regime and yet maintaining an Old Regime institution. It was not enough simply to change political sovereignty; the very manner in which the government acted and related to its subjects had to change as well. To continue the lottery would be to rule in a way that appealed to the people’s passions regardless of what might actually be best for them based upon reason. If one were to overthrow the Old Regime then one had to overthrow this political theory as well.

In the end, Talleyrand’s polemic against the Royal Lottery was as much as anything a political statement. Lotteries were inherently corrupt and corrupting to all who touched them. As Talleyrand declared to the National Assembly, “it is demonstrated that the lottery is essentially vicious, and that, in every respect, it corrupts the people and makes them wretched: of what importance then are the vain regrets and foolish hopes to which they give themselves over?” The public could not be the final arbiter of its own good. As he stated, “if, in their delirium, they [the people] fail to recognize their interests...it is necessary to work for their happiness at the risk of enduring their first murmurs” of discontent.⁸⁰ Unlike the monarchy, Talleyrand implied, the National Assembly should not give way to popular pressure, but should follow reason in doing what was best for the public in the long run. The Revolution could not make the same mistake as the king by limiting itself to the expression of popular will. “To govern men is to know their true needs and not to obey their dissolute caprices. Should the art of

⁷⁹ *AP*, 10: 553. “renversement de toute raison!”

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 10: 553. “Il est démontré que la loterie est essentiellement vicieuse, et que, sous tous les rapports, elle corrompt le peuple et le rend malheureux: qu’important donc les vains regrets et les folles espérances auxquelles il s’abandonne?”; “Si, dans son délire, il méconnaît ses intérêts...il faut travailler à son bonheur, au risque d’essayer ses premiers murmures.”

government then no longer be the expression of the public reason, made in order to overcome the gap in the reason of private individuals?”⁸¹ To take advantage of the weak-minded by keeping the lottery would mean that the Revolution was nothing more than the monarchy in a new form. The Royal Lottery and the French Revolution could not coexist.

Talleyrand was very much a man of the Old Regime. He came from a noble family and ultimately pursued a lucrative career as a cleric—won through his family connections. Yet in his speech in the National Assembly, he did everything he could to associate the Royal Lottery with the Old Regime and thereby denounce both. He did so by depicting the lottery ticket buyer not as the rational, self-interested consumer, but as the irrational member of the crowd who followed his passions, just as the moralists did.

Talleyrand gave his speech on December 12, 1789; before the end of the year an anonymous pamphlet was published that sought to refute him. The author of *Réponse à Monseigneur l'Évêque d'Autun, au sujet de son ouvrage sur les loteries* attacked Talleyrand as a moral and political hypocrite, and at the same time defended the Royal Lottery as an institution desired by the public. The *Réponse* took a decidedly snide and dismissive tone toward Talleyrand. Talleyrand had attacked the monarchy for acting hypocritically in outlawing most gambling games and yet operating the largest gambling game that Europe had ever known. With tongue in cheek, the author coyly complimented Talleyrand for his devotion to morality and religion. Playing on Talleyrand's well-publicized reputation as a gambler, as well as a womanizer, the author of the *Réponse* added that “I myself would not have doubted that you spoke of that which you had never

⁸¹ Ibid., 10: 553. “Gouverner les hommes, c’est connaître leurs vrais besoins, et non pas obéir à leurs caprices déréglés. L’art du gouvernement ne serait-il donc plus l’expression de la raison publique, faite pour contenir les écarts de la raison des particuliers?”

known (*la Belle* and *le Biribi*).”⁸² Of course, Talleyrand was very well acquainted with those things. *La belle* and *le biribi* were both gambling games favored in aristocratic and court circles.⁸³ The author thus attacked Talleyrand for his hypocrisy while also drawing attention to his aristocratic origins.

The author of the *Réponse* did not limit himself to attacking Talleyrand’s moral hypocrisy. Talleyrand had attacked the Royal Lottery as a lingering institution from the Old Regime and further still, an Old Regime institution that fostered inequality. His critic pointedly attacked Talleyrand himself as a carryover of the Old Regime. The title of the pamphlet, *Réponse à Monseigneur l’Évêque d’Autun*, drew attention to Talleyrand’s clerical title and associated him with the increasingly unpopular Catholic church. The author also referred to Talleyrand by using the Old Regime, noble, and clerical title of “Monseigneur” rather than simply monsieur, and then mocked Talleyrand’s speech as a “sermon,” referring to the printed version of it as his *Instruction Pastorale*.⁸⁴ This was particularly loaded, since an *instruction pastorale* was nothing less than a published letter by a bishop to his dioceses to serve as instruction in matters of theology and practice.⁸⁵ It was meant to remind readers of Talleyrand’s clerical position as well as to characterize his argument about the lottery as a piece of clerical rhetoric meant to dictate rather than persuade.

⁸² *Réponse à Monseigneur l’Évêque d’Autun, au sujet de son ouvrage sur les loteries* (Paris, 1789), 3. “Je ne me serois pas douté que vous parliez de ce que vous n’auriez jamais dû connoître, (*la Belle et le Biribi*).”

⁸³ Thomas M. Kavanagh, *Dice, Cards, Wheels: A Different History of French Culture* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2005), 90.

⁸⁴ *Réponse à Monseigneur l’Évêque d’Autun*, 5.

⁸⁵ John McManners, *Church and Society in Eighteenth Century France. Volume I: The Clerical Establishment and Its Social Ramifications* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998), 263-265; and Dale Van Kley, ed., *The French Idea of Freedom: The Old Regime and the Declaration of Rights of 1789* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996), 353.

The *Réponse* attacked Talleyrand as morally hypocritical and tried to associate him with Old Regime hierarchy, but it also turned the tables on Talleyrand politically. As many others had before him, Talleyrand made the argument that through the Royal Lottery the monarch had taken advantage of the credulity of his subjects. Indeed, this was very much Talleyrand's argument against the Royal Lottery as a voluntary tax. By the logic of this argument, lottery ticket consumers were hapless victims devoid of any agency, perhaps even incapable of agency, in which they were acted upon rather than acting. Indeed, Talleyrand stated explicitly that whether or not people are capable of agency, they should not be allowed it. The *Réponse* took a very different tack. Rather than dogmatically instructing the people in their duty, the author announced to Talleyrand that he was "submitting to you, as well as to the public...my ideas on the lottery that you proscribed. Then, opposing mine to yours, it will be the political world and not the religious [*dévot*] which will judge us."⁸⁶ He was confident that the "general opinion" would support his position. The author put his ideas directly to the public so that it could decide the matter in contrast to Talleyrand who dictated to the public in the manner of a cleric who claimed to stand above them. In this way, the author of the pamphlet turned the tables on Talleyrand and all those who sought to suppress the Royal Lottery. Whenever those like Talleyrand who opposed the lottery sought to associate it with the "despotism" of the Old Regime monarchy, supporters of the lottery, who knew it was very popular, argued that suppressing it would go against popular opinion, for which they claimed to speak.

⁸⁶ *Réponse à Monseigneur l'Évêque d'Autun*, 5. "je vais vous soumettre, ainsi qu'au Public...mes idées sur la Loterie, que vous proscrivez. Ensuite, opposant les miennes aux vôtres, ce sera le monde politique et non dévot qui nous jugera."

The *Réponse* did not so much defend the Royal Lottery as it defended the judgment and will of the public. By calling on the public will to decide, the author implied that the lottery was not inherently a bad thing and that it could be used for good. Indeed, he never even claimed to approve of lotteries himself, suggesting that his own opinion was not relevant. Instead, he used the fairly common argument that foreign lotteries were widespread enough throughout France that suppression of the Royal Lottery would simply lead to money flowing across French borders to foreign economies. The lottery was thus a “necessary evil,” but a necessary evil ultimately based on the public and “its taste for gambling” which made it necessary “not only to tolerate the lotteries, but even positively to establish them” for the state’s benefit. While the author may have thought of the lottery as an “evil,” the public’s desire for it made the Royal Lottery “a very politically necessary evil.”⁸⁷ It was the public who had the final word on the matter, not Talleyrand or the National Assembly.

Talleyrand’s speech and the *Réponse* point to one of the crucial issues in deciding whether the Royal Lottery was a voluntary or coercive tax and also what was at stake in that discussion. Talleyrand scoffed at the idea of the lottery as a voluntary tax in large part because he did not think the public was capable of making such decisions. In that way the lottery was by definition coercive and inherently arbitrary. The *Réponse* on the other hand defended the Royal Lottery as a “free tax” and a “voluntary tax.”⁸⁸ In order to defend that position, the author used the language of the public. It was because the public wanted the lottery that it had to be continued. No one defended the lottery on absolute grounds or on moral grounds, but they could defend the lottery on political grounds.

⁸⁷ Ibid., 7-8. “leur goût pour les jeux de hasard”; “nonseulement de tolérer les Loteries, mais même positivement d’en établir”; “un mal très politiquement nécessaire.”

⁸⁸ Ibid., 5, and 7-8.

Within this debate between Talleyrand and his anonymous opponent, there existed two very different understandings of the very meaning of the French Revolution. Neither Talleyrand nor his anonymous counterpart would gain the upper hand and the political tension surrounding the Royal Lottery would continue.

Between Patriotism and Criminality

Talleyrand's famous denunciation of the Royal Lottery and the printed response to it defined the two poles of a debate that would continue long after December 1789 as more complicated positions were articulated between them. That was particularly true for the National Assembly's Finance Committee, which oversaw the day-to-day financial operations of the government including the Royal Lottery. As such, the Finance Committee was in the position of having to balance the rhetoric of the Revolution with the practicalities of daily administration. There was much ideological fervor and rhetoric against the Royal Lottery, not the least of which came from Talleyrand, yet that was coupled with the silence of the June 17, 1789 decree in regard to the lottery. In that decree, the National Assembly declared that sovereignty rested within it, and that all taxes under the Old Regime were illegitimate. Nonetheless it provided for the continued collection of taxes. It maintained the practical status quo while changing the ideological underpinnings for taxation. With no mention of the Royal Lottery, the debate over its future was less constrained and more ambiguous. The Finance Committee seemed perfectly happy to maintain a balance between the two poles that Talleyrand and his

anonymous opponent held. They were willing to keep the lottery and collect the much needed funds, yet unwilling to embrace it openly.

This ambiguous balancing act was more or less acknowledged by Charles-François Lebrun. As spokesman for the Finance Committee, Lebrun regularly gave the National Assembly reports about the financial status of the government. As part of one of those reports, Lebrun announced a few administrative changes to the Royal Lottery in early July 1790. In response, a member pointedly asked Lebrun if that meant that it was his intention to keep the lottery, at least temporarily. Lebrun responded curtly in the affirmative.⁸⁹ Lebrun's response was far from a detailed explication of policy and philosophy, leaving listeners to guess what the future direction of the Royal Lottery might be. The Finance Committee seemed content to maintain the Royal Lottery without actually endorsing it as consistent with the Revolution.

Lebrun learned the hard way about speaking his mind about the Royal Lottery when giving one of the committee's regular reports to the Assembly a few months later on October 10, 1790. Using revolutionary language, he lent his full support to the Royal Lottery in an effort to wrest it from the current ambiguity and bring it fully under the auspices of the Revolution. Lebrun made his fellow deputies aware of the dire status of the finances, noting that they were facing a stunning deficit of nearly 300 million livres for the year. The situation was complicated further by the fact that, as we have seen, tax collections had been unstable since the National Assembly's June 17, 1789 declaration of sovereignty. Seeking to rectify this situation, Lebrun boldly suggested that the Royal Lottery, which had maintained a stable revenue source to that point, could be used to help close the deficit. "Allow me to recommend to your patriotism," Lebrun pleaded with the

⁸⁹ *Réimpression de l'ancien Moniteur*, 32 vols. (Paris, 1858-1870), vol. 5, July 4, 1790.

legislators, “a *régie* which could be one of the most fertile and innocent sources of public revenue.” He knew that the proposal would not sit well with many of the members, but he encouraged them to be open minded about it. “Let us cast aside, I implore you, let us cast aside the former prejudices and we will see in this modified and perfected *régie* only a tool that is successful and never oppressive.”⁹⁰ Lebrun’s vague statement suggested that with only some minor changes to improve the lottery it could legitimately be a part of the new revolutionary order. In other words, the lottery was neither inherently despotic nor republican. In fact, he actively encouraged the Assembly not to be prejudiced against the lottery simply because it was a by-product of the Old Regime. He suggested that the change in sovereignty from the monarchy to the nation consequently altered the meaning of the lottery as well. With the necessary modifications, the lottery could be consistent with revolutionary political culture.

Needless to say, not everyone was able to overcome that “prejudice” against the Royal Lottery. Two men in particular lashed out against Lebrun’s suggestion: the comte de Mirabeau and Étienne Clavière. The two men were friends and collaborated on speeches, pamphlets, and politics more generally.⁹¹ In October 1790, Clavière struck the first blow in a pamphlet that dealt with the larger issues of the *assignats*, the public debt, and public finances in general. Clavière, a Swiss banker and a noted financier, was very critical toward the Finance Committee almost across the board. He wanted to limit the issuing of *assignats* while the committee pushed for more *assignats* as tax revenue

⁹⁰ Ibid., vol. 6, October 14, 1790. “Permettez que je recommande à votre patriotisme une régie, qui doit être une des portes les plus fécondes et les plus innocentes des revenus public.”; “Dépouillons, je vous en conjure, dépouillons les anciennes préventions et nous ne verrons dans cette régie modifiée, perfectionnée, qu’en instrument utile et jamais oppresseur.”

⁹¹ Robert Darnton, “The Brissot Dossier,” *French Historical Studies* 17 (1991): 191-208; and Taylor, “The Paris Bourse on the Eve of the Revolution,” 952, n. 5.

continued to dry up. As a measure of the committee's desperation, it had essentially resigned itself to printing money to pay for the government's daily operations.⁹² In the process of making his larger attack, Clavière attacked the committee for suggesting that the Royal Lottery might be used to improve the nation's finances. Using Lebrun's words, Clavière exclaimed with outrage, "*patriotism* invoked in favor of the Royal Lottery!"⁹³ For most revolutionaries, "patriotism" implied selfless devotion to the greater good.⁹⁴ The use of the word in combination with the Royal Lottery seemed like an utter contradiction, since the Royal Lottery was seen by many as promoting egoism. He attacked the National Assembly's approach as counter to the revolutionary creed. Again quoting Lebrun's own words, "it is the regenerative Assembly" that sought to modify and perfect the lottery in order to use the "criminal profits of the lottery." Rather than suppressing the lottery, the Assembly seemed to favor using "revenue from theft and seduction" to reimburse the debts of the well-off. "Is that managing the finances for the relief of the people? Is that administering for the profit, honor, and glory of the Nation?" he demanded to know. Rather than working for the nation, the Finance Committee was working for speculators and debt holders. In fact, the administration of finance would work "in the sense of the Revolution" only when they worked in favor of the "public good." He knew, he claimed, that there were arguments in support of the lottery, but he also knew that "there is not one argument which can stand for one moment before good

⁹² François Crouzet, *La grande inflation: La monnaie en France de Louis XVI à Napoléon* (Paris: Fayard, 1993), 205-221.

⁹³ Étienne Clavière, *Réponse de M. Clavière à M. ****, député à l'Assemblée nationale (Paris, 1790), 7. "*Le patriotisme* invoqué en faveur de la loterie royale!"

⁹⁴ Shovlin, *The Political Economy of Virtue*, 5; for a broad discussion of discourses of patriotism, see Jay M. Smith, *Nobility Reimagined: The Patriotic Nation in Eighteenth-Century France* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2005).

sense and reason.”⁹⁵ In short, the Royal Lottery was an egotistical, exploitive, and even criminal institution. Lebrun called on patriotism to keep the Royal Lottery, while Clavière portrayed it as absolutely criminal.

Two days later, Mirabeau followed his friend’s pamphlet with a speech on the floor of the National Assembly.⁹⁶ Mirabeau recoiled at any association between patriotism, the Revolution, and the Royal Lottery. After all, according to Mirabeau, the Revolution was meant to regenerate the nation. With thunderous and indignant rhetoric, Mirabeau asked how the lottery could possibly be an “innocent” revenue source for a “regenerated nation”?⁹⁷ Mirabeau placed the Royal Lottery and the French Revolution at opposite poles of the moral and political spectrum: with the degenerate despotism under the Old Regime at one end and the regenerated *patrie* of the French Revolution at the other.

Lebrun had suggested that the nation had been regenerated sufficiently that it could use a lottery without being tainted by its corrupting influence. Clavière and Mirabeau, on the other hand, suggested that the nation was still corrupt, in part because of the continued use of the Royal Lottery, and that only a complete overhaul of the nation’s finances, regardless of the financial implications, could fulfill the Revolution’s promise of regeneration. The Royal Lottery was by definition not revolutionary in that it encouraged individuals to think of their own gain rather than the public good.

⁹⁵ Clavière, *Réponse de M. Clavière à M. ****, député à l’Assemblée nationale, 7-10 and note 1 on p. 9. “C’est l’assemblée régénératrice”; “profits criminels de la loterie”; “revenu du vol et de la séduction!”; “Est-ce là diriger les finances pour le soulagement du peuple? Est-ce là administrer pour le profit, l’honneur et la gloire de la nation.”; “il n’y a pas un argument qui puisse subsister un instant devant le bon sens et la raison.”

⁹⁶ Mirabeau’s speech was first published in the *Réimpression de l’ancien Moniteur*, vol. 6, October 25, 1790; and then later in *Collection complete des travaux de M. Mirabeau....* 5 vols. (Paris, 1791-1792), 4: 247-249.

⁹⁷ Mirabeau, *Collection complete*, 4: 247. “Les loteries sont une source innocente du revenue d’une nation régénérée!”

Meanwhile, the fact that the government considered using the Royal Lottery implied that it was thinking of its own fiscal expediency rather than the public good. For Lebrun, the Royal Lottery represented precious revenue needed to solidify the gains of the Revolution. For Clavière and Mirabeau, the Royal Lottery represented social and political disarray that had to be snuffed before any contemplation of solidifying the Revolution. It was the latter view that was voiced most loudly.

Lebrun, however, did not just speak for himself, but on behalf of the whole Finance Committee. Lebrun defended himself publicly in a letter to the editor printed in the *Moniteur universel* the day after Mirabeau's speech appeared there. Savvy enough to understand the current climate, he simply claimed that the whole affair was a big misunderstanding. Lebrun claimed that the *régie* he was referring to was not the Royal Lottery at all. "I said that the *régie des domaines*, modified, perfected could be one of the most profound and innocent sources of public revenue," he claimed, not the lottery.⁹⁸ Yet those who heard Lebrun's comments in the Assembly were left with the same impression. Lebrun's letter to the editor, claiming misinterpretation of his words, seems to be nothing more than a face saving measure taken after he realized just how politically indefensible his position was.

Clavière responded to Lebrun's letter with a formal apology, also printed in the *Moniteur universel*, but its sincerity is questionable. He apologized for the misunderstanding, but he also made it clear that it was Lebrun himself who was responsible for any possible misunderstanding since his October 10 speech would lead

⁹⁸ *Réimpression de l'ancien Moniteur*, vol. 6, October 26, 1790. "J'avais dit que la régie des domaines, modifiée, perfectionnée, serait un des sources les plus fécondes et les plus innocentes du revenu public."

any reasonable person to conclude that he was actively endorsing the Royal Lottery.⁹⁹

Clavière left it at that, but the message was clear: public endorsement of the lottery would have real political implications. The Royal Lottery had become politically toxic if not taboo. At most some might speak of it as a necessary evil but no one would again try to integrate the Royal Lottery into revolutionary discourse as Lebrun had so brazenly done.

The lottery became so politically toxic that the consumer public began to fear an imminent suppression of it. As those public fears increased, ticket sales began to drop off and profits from the Royal Lottery dropped precipitously—no doubt out of fear that winning tickets might not be paid. At least that is the way that Lebrun himself interpreted events. In the January 1791 report on the finances, Lebrun projected the Royal Lottery profits for the first three months of the year to be only a fraction of those of the previous year due to the uncertainty swirling around the Royal Lottery and its future. To stimulate sales, Lebrun encouraged the legislators to declare their intent to keep the lottery. With such public assurances he expected the Royal Lottery to bring in 10 million livres of revenue for the state in 1791.¹⁰⁰ Lebrun had learned a political lesson and changed his tone markedly between October of 1790 and January of 1791. He gave his latter statement not as an ardent advocate of the lottery but rather in the name of mere fiscal expediency.

However, even this lukewarm “support” for the Royal Lottery was questioned. Just the next month, in February, François-Alexandre-Frédéric La Rochefoucauld-Laincourt attacked the whole Finance Committee as morally weak. A left of center member of the National Assembly, La Rochefoucauld was head of the Taxation

⁹⁹ Ibid., vol 6, November 5, 1790.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., vol. 7, January 16, 1791.

Committee, a subcommittee of the larger Finance Committee.¹⁰¹ He had also become one of the leading opponents of the entirety of the Old Regime taxation system as despotic. A few months before, in August 1790, he famously called on the Assembly to banish the very word tax, *impôt*, from the French language.¹⁰² Commenting on the Finance Committee's January 1791 report, La Rochefoucauld argued that the lottery was indeed a "tax" and furthermore "the most immoral of all" taxes. He told the National Assembly that the committee was disinclined to destroy the lottery for fear of fiscal hardship, but, addressing the committee directly, "you cannot excuse yourselves for still allowing it to subsist."¹⁰³ Significantly, La Rochefoucauld, unlike Lebrun, linked the Royal Lottery with taxation, but for him, the lottery represented the very worst of the previous taxation regime. The Royal Lottery was not benign.

Dupont de Nemours also insisted that the Royal Lottery had to be expunged from the new revolutionary France. Dupont de Nemours wrote a preface for the 1791 printing of the Nemours *cahier*, originally printed in 1789, as well as other revisions to the original document. Dupont de Nemours drew a line in the sand. He argued that the French Revolution had made it impossible to keep the Royal Lottery without undermining the legitimacy of the whole Revolution. One of the larger goals of the Revolution was to root out moral contradictions under the Old Regime such as the Royal Lottery. To contemplate keeping it would be potentially disastrous. After all, Dupont de Nemours asked, "what would it be if this scandalous contradiction emanated from a

¹⁰¹ Kenneth Margerison, *P.-L. Roederer: Political Thought and Practice During the French Revolution* (Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society, 1983), 33-34.

¹⁰² Kwass, *Privilege and the Politics of Taxation in Eighteenth-Century France*, 1.

¹⁰³ *Réimpression de l'ancien Moniteur*, vol. 7, February 20, 1791. "impôt"; "le plus immoral de tous"; "mais vous ne pouvez vous dispenser de le laisser subsister encore."

National Assembly?” He then answered his own question: a “Royal Lottery.”¹⁰⁴ The National Assembly itself was meant to regenerate the nation and take the interests of the whole nation to heart. By contrast, the Royal Lottery placed the government in the position of a banker whose interests were opposed to those of its citizens. The thought of the revolutionary government simply taking over leadership of the lottery and thereby becoming its new banker was simply antithetical to the author’s own revolutionary principles. Ending the lottery had become one of the priorities for the Dupont de Nemours, and he identified the very mission of the Revolution with the suppression of the Royal Lottery. He argued that the nation in the form of the electors “could never let its Assembly go home without having proscribed the lottery with the indignation that it should excite.”¹⁰⁵ The Revolution would never be complete until the Royal Lottery was suppressed. The Revolution could never reconcile itself to maintaining the lottery. Regardless of the fiscal considerations, suppression was a moral and political imperative.

It was the omission of any reference to the Royal Lottery in the June 17, 1789 decree that had left the role it would play in revolutionary finances in doubt. This lapse was mentioned by M. Dauchy on the floor of the National Assembly in October 1791. A little-known Assembly member, Dauchy was a man of few words and little imagination. He was perhaps best known for his reading of the Assembly’s minutes on June 21, 1791. Seemingly unaware of the real issue of the day, Dauchy matter-of-factly read the minutes at the very moment that everyone else in the National Assembly was abuzz about the just

¹⁰⁴ Dupont de Nemours, *De la loterie*, 8. “Que seroit-ce si cette scandaleuse contradiction émanoit d’une Assemblée nationale?”

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., 10. “ne pourront jamais séparer leur Assemblée sans avoir pros crit la loterie avec l’indignation qu’elle doit exciter.”

arriving news of the king's flight to Varennes.¹⁰⁶ He kept with his reputation in October 1791 by speaking all of three sentences and again seeming to miss the point. He declared, "I believe that it is necessary that the current National Assembly decree that the collections...[of] the lotteries should continue to take place."¹⁰⁷ This was meant to calm the open and long standing debate about the Royal Lottery by officially stating the legislature's stance on the matter as a matter of law. The National Assembly immediately approved the decree without discussion, but it far from closed the debate. Dauchy meant simply to fill the legal void by adding the lottery to the June 17 decree, but his proposal differed significantly from the original decree. For one thing, Dauchy did not declare the Royal Lottery null and void as the June 17 decree had done for taxes. Dauchy's proposal made no pretense at all of ending the lotteries and then allowing them again under new sovereign authority. The legitimacy of the lottery was thus not clearly established. Dauchy's proposal left many questions unanswered, but its approval made clear that the lottery would be maintained in the immediate future. Perhaps most importantly, it forced the National Assembly to come out in support of the Royal Lottery by approving his measure.

Sans-Culottes, the National Convention, and Suppression

Dauchy's proposal in October 1791 was meant to put an end to debate about the future of the Royal Lottery, but the Revolution's course was far from stable and many

¹⁰⁶ G. Lenotre, *The Flight of Marie Antoinette*, translated by Mrs. Rodolph Stawell (London: William Heinemann, 1906), 111-112; for the flight of the royal family, see Timothy Tackett, *When the King Took Flight* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003).

¹⁰⁷ *Réimpression de l'ancien Moniteur*, vol. 10, October 2, 1791. "Je crois qu'il faut que l'Assemblée nationale actuelle décrète que les perceptions...les loteries continueront à avoir lieu."

developments in the second half of 1791 and over the course of 1792 would once again cast doubt over the future of the lottery. Despite the loud protests of a vociferous few, the majority within the National Assembly and then the Legislative Assembly clearly had no great desire to suppress an institution that was both bringing in significant revenue and popular. The political and economic situation within France deteriorated markedly in the second half of 1791. The king's attempt to escape Paris for the frontier failed during that summer and the subsequent debate about the king's future divided the body politic. Those who supported a more moderate form of government continued to insist on a role for the king as part of a constitutional monarchy. Those who felt the king abdicated through his attempted escape wanted to remove the king and declare a republic. Rumors abounded of conspiracy, sabotage, and foreign invasion. The revolutionaries began to fear enemies everywhere, inside and outside of France. Many nobles had already fled the country and now even the king could no longer be trusted.¹⁰⁸

The economic situation also deteriorated. During the second half of 1791, prices began rising dramatically. During the winter of 1791-1792, prices rose and commodities became more scarce. The economic uncertainty coupled with the political uncertainty caused a great deal of anxiety and fear.¹⁰⁹ Rumors began to spread that the king himself was responsible for the scarcity of goods and high prices in an effort to bring the Revolution to its knees. There were also more vague rumors that the "merchant

¹⁰⁸ Tackett, *When the King Took Flight*, 124-170.

¹⁰⁹ For the economic conditions, see Aftalion, *The French Revolution: An Economic Interpretation*, 102-118; and Doyle, *The Oxford History of the French Revolution*, 180-183.

aristocracy” or “bourgeois aristocracy” were behind the economic problems in a counter-revolutionary conspiracy to starve the newly-freed French citizens into submission.¹¹⁰

The deteriorating economic conditions finally seemed to hit lottery sales. In 1788, the lottery had brought in around 10,700,000 livres. And for the twelve-month period spanning from May 1789 to April 1790 the lottery’s profit actually increased by nearly 2 million livres to 12,700,000 livres.¹¹¹ But with the monetary instability and economic chaos that engulfed France in 1791, lottery revenues dropped off. By April of 1792, the Finance Committee estimated that lottery profits for that year would be a mere 8 million livres.¹¹² In fact, it was significantly worse. By then the head of finances, Clavière reported in February 1793 that the lottery had only returned a profit of 3,477,000 livres for the public treasury for all of 1792. He also noted that there was little hope that 1793 would prove any better for the lottery.¹¹³ The economic turmoil of 1792 had obliterated lottery sales, but considering the rapid inflation of the time, the drop in relative terms was much greater.

The political situation in France also changed dramatically as a popular insurrection finally dethroned the French king on August 10, 1792, and an insurrectionary Commune was formed in Paris to help guide this new popular phase of the Revolution. The new National Convention met for the first time on September 20, 1792 with the goal of writing a new constitution for a new republican France.¹¹⁴ Even under this fluid and dynamic political situation, the National Convention seemed no more inclined to act

¹¹⁰ For use of the expressions “merchant aristocracy” and “bourgeois aristocracy,” see Aftalion, *The French Revolution: An Economic Interpretation*, 119-120; and Shovlin, *The Political Economy of Virtue*, 180-181.

¹¹¹ AN, D X 2, “Loterie Royale. Son Administration – Traitement, Gratifications, Pension, & etc.” Also, see Leonnet, *Les loteries d’état en France aux XVIIIe et XIXe siècles*, 26.

¹¹² *Réimpression de l’ancien Moniteur*, vol. 12, April 6, 1792.

¹¹³ Étienne Clavière, *Compte rendu par le Ministre, au premier février 1793* (Paris, 1793), 18-19.

¹¹⁴ Doyle, *The Oxford History of the French Revolution*, 174-196; and Colin Jones, *The Great Nation: France from Louis XV to Napoleon, 1715-99* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002), 462-475.

against the Royal Lottery than had the previous legislatures. The case of Jean-Jacques Dusaulx is illustrative in this regard. As mentioned before, Dusaulx was already famous for having written the most ardent anti-gambling and anti-lottery works of the Old Regime. In fact, Dusaulx was almost certainly the cause's most famous crusader, and he continued those efforts as a member of the Convention's Committee of Public Instruction. Dusaulx and Mercier, also a member of the committee, were charged with drawing up a "report against gambling, lotteries, etc."¹¹⁵ After considering their report on November 20 and November 30, 1792, the committee began drafting a decree to present to the National Convention in the hope that the Convention would no longer "support the injustice and opprobrium of the lotteries."¹¹⁶ The Committee of Public Instruction was openly frustrated with the Convention's general willingness to maintain the status quo. The draft decree stated that "all types of gambling and *tripots* [gambling dens], no less detrimental to the republican spirit than the lotteries, are from this day forbidden without any further delay."¹¹⁷ On numerous occasions in the remaining weeks of 1792, Dusaulx made repeated efforts to bring his and Mercier's report and the Committee of Public Instruction's suppression decree to the floor of the National Convention for consideration. Despite Dusaulx's best efforts, however, the Convention simply ignored him on every occasion.¹¹⁸

The push that would finally end the lottery came primarily from outside the revolutionary legislative halls. Image 5.1 portrays the people of Paris spontaneously

¹¹⁵ M. J. Guillaume, ed. *Procès-Verbaux du Comité d'Instruction Publique de la Convention Nationale*, 7 vols. (Paris, 1891), 1: 43.

¹¹⁶ Ibid., 1: 74 and 103-104. "supporter l'injustice et l'opprobre des loteries."

¹¹⁷ Ibid., 1: 104. "toutes sortes de jeux de hasard et de tripots, non moins préjudiciables à l'esprit républicain que les loteries, sont à compter de ce jour défendus sans autre délai."

¹¹⁸ Ibid., 1: 105, 174, 245, 247, and 357.

covering the word “royale” on the marquee of an office of the Loterie Royale de France. The image itself is not dated, but it clearly depicts the popular disaffection with anything associated with the monarchy, most likely in the wake of the king’s attempted flight.¹¹⁹ In an effort to disassociate the lottery from the king, the lottery’s name was finally changed from the Royal Lottery to the National Lottery. There is no record of the National Convention changing the lottery’s name. But without explanation, the *Moniteur universel* referred to it as the National Lottery for the first time in reference to the drawing of October 16, 1792.¹²⁰ Most likely, “National Lottery” became the popular appellation for the lottery and the paper’s use of it was simply a recognition of the de facto name change. In the end, it is impossible to say with certitude the exact origin of the new name, but it is certain that by October it was indeed the National Lottery, not the Royal Lottery.

By all accounts, the Royal Lottery had always been very popular with the popular classes, but the political and economic situation had changed drastically in the previous twelve months. As prices rose and goods became more scarce, discretionary income of the popular classes dropped precipitously and daily life became much harsher. The sans culottes movement grew in prominence as economic demands from the popular classes in Paris became more and more prominent. The popular movement fostered an even more radical group loosely called the *enragés*, whose primary demands included such things as active pursuit and punishment of speculators and hoarders, lowering the cost of living, and setting maximum price levels for goods deemed necessities.¹²¹

¹¹⁹ Tackett, *When the King Took Flight*, 108-116.

¹²⁰ *Réimpression de l’ancien Moniteur*, vol. 14, October 18, 1792.

¹²¹ Crouzet, *La grande inflation*, 225-279.

The sans culottes and *enragés* were an extra-parliamentary power whose primary concerns were economic but with serious political implications. There was a prevailing opinion that there were forces conspiring against the popular classes. Just as speculation and egoism were questioned in the 1780s, so were they during the Revolution, particularly during this phase. In the 1780s, speculators were deemed politically and morally unhealthy for the body politic, but now under the increasingly popular and radical revolutionary ideology, their actions were construed as criminal violations against the nation. People who engaged in stock trading, insurance, or gambling were no longer mere egoists but also traitors against the nation. The failure of the National Convention to act promptly on sans culottes demands did not ingratiate it the popular classes.

On June 25, 1793, Jacques Roux, an *enragés* leader, gave a fiery speech to the Convention in which he implicated it as part of the problem: “a hundred times this sacred enclosure [the National Convention] has echoed with the crimes of egoists and rogues. The constitution is to be presented to the sovereign power, to receive its sanction; have you proscribed stock-jobbing therein? No. Have you pronounced the death penalty against hoarders? No. ... We are telling you that you have not done all that you could for the welfare of the people.”¹²² The National Convention was thus feeling pressure from the popular, and potentially insurrectionary, classes to move on economic matters and relieve economic suffering. In June, following Roux’s speech, the Convention finally banned stock companies and shut down the Bourse.¹²³ Despite moving against speculation and the Bourse, the Convention still did not act on the lottery, yet it was as closely linked politically as ever with other forms of financial innovation and risk taking.

¹²² Quoted in Aftalion, *The French Revolution: An Economic Interpretation*, 139-140.

¹²³ Taylor, “The Paris Bourse on the Eve of the French Revolution,” 957.

It became a trope to refer to the Bourse as a game. One pamphlet referred to the stock market as nothing more than a “seductive lottery,” ruining families every year. “The stock market game and the lottery game are the same as other proscribed games,” those with a “passion for the game...will squander their entire fortune.”¹²⁴ Yet the Bourse was gone and the lottery remained.

The National Convention succumbed to sans culottes pressure by instituting many of their demands, and by moving to protect the patriot “buyers” against the criminal “sellers.” Prominent in this story of buyers and sellers was the National Lottery in which the government was still acting as one of these notorious “merchant aristocrats,” yet the Convention still did not act against the lottery.¹²⁵ When the lottery was brought back to the attention of the Convention it was from Léonard Bourdon, a committed *sectionnaire* whose sympathies openly lay with the urban poor and sans culottes.¹²⁶ On September 1, 1793, Bourdon called on the Convention to turn its attention toward the well-being of citizens by taking a fresh look at gambling. Bourdon pushed the Convention to decree immediately the end of all games of chance, including the National Lottery, as a way to improve the material well-being of the poor by protecting them from unscrupulous speculators who preyed upon the credulous.¹²⁷ It is worth noting that Bourdon’s proposed suppression was intended to protect the credulous from the revolutionary government itself which still operated the National Lottery.

¹²⁴ Maurice Gouget-Deslandres, *Du crédit public en France; ou, Moyens de réunion proposés à tous les citoyens...pour l'accroissement du crédit public, pour le maintien des fortunes particulières, et la destruction absolue de toute espèce d'agiotage* (Paris, 1792), xviii-xix. “Il en est du jeu de la bourse et des loteries, comme des autres jeux défendus”; “passion du jeu...dilapidera toute sa fortune.”

¹²⁵ For use of the expressions “merchant aristocracy” and “bourgeois aristocracy,” see Aftalion, *The French Revolution: An Economic Interpretation*, 119-120; and Shovlin, *The Political Economy of Virtue*, 180-181.

¹²⁶ Michael J. Sydenham, *Léonard Bourdon: The Career of a Revolutionary, 1754-1807* (Waterloo, Ont.: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1999).

¹²⁷ *Réimpression de l'ancien Moniteur*, vol. 17, September 2, 1793.

Not everyone was ready to speak out against the lottery. François Chabot, a member of the Committee of General Security during the Terror, suggested that the wealth redistribution process of the lottery could simply be inverted. He vaguely argued that the profits of the lottery, rather than going to the “merchant aristocrats,” should be turned “to the profit of the people.”¹²⁸ In the National Convention on September 9, 1793, Chabot went so far as to argue that those who wanted to suppress the National Lottery were none other than the “capitalist aristocrats.” They wanted to suppress the lottery, he argued, to reroute the former lottery revenue into their own banks and speculative endeavors, so that suppressing the lottery would not help the indigent at all.¹²⁹ For Chabot, then, the answer was not to suppress the lotteries but to funnel the lottery’s profits back to the poor, thereby keeping the money out of the hands of the speculative “bourgeois aristocrats.” Chabot took the merchant aristocracy theories to new levels.

Chabot’s novel argument put all those who opposed the lottery on the defensive as potential bourgeois aristocrats. Dusaulx, probably the most doggedly persistent opponent of the lottery, felt the need to defend himself against the accusation of financial self-interest. Speaking to the Convention he proclaimed, “I declare that it is in my soul and conscience that I have long since proposed the suppression of the lotteries and that I have viewed it as a part of political regeneration.”¹³⁰ Certainly, Dusaulx was no speculator, but that specter now became the dominant preoccupation of all those involved with the lottery or in the discussion surrounding it, just as the specter of conspiracy and counter-revolution pervaded most aspects of the Revolution from 1791 through the

¹²⁸ Ibid., vol. 17, September 10, 1793.

¹²⁹ Ibid., vol. 17, September 12, 1793.

¹³⁰ Ibid., vol. 17, September 12, 1793. “Je déclare que c’est dans mon âme et conscience que j’ai depuis longtemps proposé la suppression des loteries, et que j’ai regardée comme une partie de la régénération politique.”

Terror. In many ways the two merged, and for all intents and purposes, the specter of the merchant aristocrat was simply part of the larger fears of counter-revolution. No matter what side of the issue one took, the opposing side would be labeled as a speculator and aristocrat which implied being a counter-revolutionary traitor who worked for his own benefit rather than the public welfare and good of the nation.

Even after all of the economic and political turmoil of the previous two years and the open debate about the lottery in September of 1793, the National Convention still did not act. The pressure within the Convention was not enough to push suppression forward in that chamber, but extra-parliamentary pressure began to mount. The members of the Convention were informed in October that the Cordeliers Club had officially asked the Council General of the Commune to take the lead in the struggle against the National Lottery and gambling more generally.¹³¹ That was followed on November 15, 1793 by the arrival at the National Convention of a deputation from the Commune's Council General. The deputation demanded that the legislature suppress all lotteries throughout France.¹³²

The appearance of Commune deputations with demands had become fairly standard in the Convention over the course of 1793.¹³³ They made many social and economic demands that the Convention seemed little inclined to hear. For the sans culottes, and their allies in the Commune, the hope of liberty in 1789 was much broader than simply political liberty. Many expected the Revolution to improve their material situation as well. As a deputation explained to the Convention in April of 1793, "when in '89, the French people won back its liberty, it lived in the hope that it might enjoy all the

¹³¹ Ibid., vol. 18, October 20, 1793.

¹³² Ibid., vol. 18, November 16, 1793.

¹³³ Aftalion, *The French Revolution: An Economic Interpretation*, 132-133.

goods such liberty promised. For four years now, there has been no limit to the sacrifices that it has made.”¹³⁴ Along those lines, the Commune and sans culottes had pressured the Convention to take measures to protect people economically, such as instituting the Maximum and harsher penalties against hoarders. It was under extra-parliamentary pressure that the Convention had suppressed the Bourse and other speculative concerns in September, and yet, the November Commune deputation pointed out, “after having struck at speculation and monopolizing, it remains for you strike a scourge of which the indigent class is especially victim.”¹³⁵ That “scourge” was the National Lottery.

For many sans culottes, particularly within the context of the economic turmoil of 1793, the Old Regime represented the pursuit of self-interest by the privileged at the expense of the rest of society, especially the popular classes. Within that context, the Commune deputation lectured the National Convention about the lottery, explaining how it was nothing more than a “scourge invented by despotism.” The lottery was only possible under despotism, because no free people living under the principles of the general will would act against itself. Despotism implied the will of an individual whose interest was opposed to that of the nation. The French Revolution, on the other hand, concerned itself with the nation and public well-being. In this context, the lottery could only be seen as a measure borne out of the despotism of the Old Regime and “such an abuse should no longer exist under the regime of liberty.” The Revolution and the liberty it promised could not be reconciled with the lottery, so the Commune called for “the

¹³⁴ Quoted in Aftalion, *The French Revolution: An Economic Interpretation*, 133.

¹³⁵ *Réimpression de l'ancien Moniteur*, vol. 18, November 16, 1793. “Après avoir frappé l’agiotage et l’accaparement, il vous reste à frapper un fléau dont la classe indigente est surtout la victime.”

suppression of all lotteries, and especially the lottery formerly called royal.”¹³⁶ That same day the Convention at long last succumbed to the sans culottes and Commune’s pressure and finally suppressed all lotteries throughout France. The National Lottery would have its last drawing the very next day on November 16, 1793.¹³⁷ After 27 years of continuous operation, first as the Royal Lottery and then as the National Lottery, the lottery would be completely shut down.

Conclusion

The Royal Lottery presented a unique problem for the French Revolution. The French monarchy defined the lottery by using the language of the public. But the Royal Lottery was founded within the political context of the Old Regime taxation system, which had been politically contested. Within that political context, the monarchy’s opponents had discursively labeled taxation as an institution of arbitrary authority to which the French nation had not consented.¹³⁸ The lottery thus stood at something of a discursive intersection. The revolutionaries were never comfortably able to reconcile the two. The Royal Lottery had been so firmly associated with the politics of the Old Regime that no one was able discursively to separate the two, and any who tried to connect positively the lottery with the Revolution was harshly denounced. Nonetheless, the Royal Lottery continued until November 1793. The obvious question that needs to be

¹³⁶ Ibid., vol. 18, November 16, 1793. “fléau inventé par le despotisme pour faire taire le peuple sur sa misère en le leurrant d’une espérance que ne faisait qu’aggraver sa calamité.”; “Un tel abus ne doit plus exister sous le régime de la liberté.”; “la suppression de toutes les loteries, et surtout de la loterie ci-devant royale.”

¹³⁷ Ibid., vol. 18, November 16, 1793.

¹³⁸ Kwass, *Privilege and the Politics of Taxation in Eighteenth-Century France*, 231-237.

addressed is, why and what was it that ultimately led to its suppression in November 1793 and not in 1789?

The political fate of the Royal Lottery had a direct correlation to the French economy. Indeed, the lottery boom over the course of the eighteenth century coincided with French economic growth and expansion. The continued growth of the Royal Lottery in the early stages of the Revolution made it a compelling revenue source for a revolutionary government dealing with a fiscal crisis. To say the least, there were many who were uneasy with the Royal Lottery. Lotteries and gambling more generally had long been linked with controversial speculation and egoism. Yet the monarchy and supporters of the Royal Lottery were able to defend the lottery as simply a participant within the voluntary consumer sphere. This defense was successful enough to maintain the lottery, but that argument broke down with the economy. The French economy began to show signs of strain in 1791 and began to break down in 1792. The economy collapsed nearly completely in 1793. It was within that economic context that the lottery became increasingly difficult to defend politically. There was a direct correlation between increased economic anxieties and decreased ability, and desire, to defend the lottery politically. The economic turmoil of 1793 increased the discourse of a more traditional, moral, and controlled economy. That economy privileged consumers over merchants. Indeed, being a merchant in 1793 could be downright dangerous. As the economy deteriorated, the popular movements pushed for more and more consumer protections against increasingly vilified merchants who were even suspected of counter-revolutionary activity. In that context, the lottery simply became politically untenable as revolutionaries could not be associated in any way with the merchant class. In the end,

the National Lottery was suppressed under sans culottes and Commune pressure and implicit suggestions of counter-revolutionary complicity. In other words, the deputies of the National Convention suppressed the lottery because they feared being labeled as traitors.

There is probably no better illustration of the National Lottery's suppression and the Convention's attitude toward it than the Finance Committee's own report from 1793. In the section on the lottery, the report noted that, "everyone believes that such a tax [the lottery] should sooner or later be proscribed in a republican state." That statement reveals the committee's sense of external pressure, but it is hardly revelatory of the committee's own political convictions. Most telling, the report noted that the lottery's profits had dropped off considerably to only 3 million livres. That represented just a quarter of the lottery's profits at the beginning of the Revolution. Considering the hyperinflation of 1792 and 1793, those 3 million livres were worth significantly less than they would have been in 1789. The Finance Committee seemed more resigned to the suppression than anything else. The committee's report noted that the lottery's fiscal significance was greatly diminished, and therefore "the real sacrifice we will have to make will be considerably less than we had thought."¹³⁹ The Convention suppressed the lottery not on ideological grounds but for practical political and economic reasons.

¹³⁹ *Rapport général sur les contributions de 1793, et projet de décret qui doivent en précéder la fixation, présentés au nom du Comité des finances, section des contributions directes et indirectes* (Paris, 1793), 38-39. "Tout le monde convient qu'un tel impôt doit être tôt ou tard pros crit d'un état républicain."; "Le sacrifice réel que nous aurions à faire seroit moins considérable que l'on ne pense."



Image 5.1: *Parisians Covering Symbols of Royalty*. (From Tackett, *When the King Took Flight*, 110).

Chapter 6:

Conclusion

In 1790, Edmund Burke wrote one of the most eloquent explanations and impassioned denunciations of the French Revolution. In his *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, he attacked the revolutionaries for infusing “the spirit and symbols of gaming” into every facet of French life and codifying that spirit as part of the new French constitution: “Your legislators, in everything new, are the very first who have founded a commonwealth upon gaming, and infused this spirit into it as its vital breath. The great object in these politics is to metamorphose France, from a great kingdom into one great play-table; to turn its inhabitants into a nation of gamblers.” Burke claimed that the Revolution was a speculative and radical break from the past and tradition. France had become unmoored from the anchor of history. Burke’s text reveals a deep sense of unease; in his view, the only certainty was uncertainty and instability. Even the most outrageous speculations in French history such as the Law Affair and the Mississippi Bubble were at least confined to a few, he claimed. But with the Revolution, the spirit of gaming, speculation, and innovation was all pervasive and “extends further,

as in lotteries” through the body politic.¹ For Burke, the French Revolution was nothing more than a giant political, economic, and historic spin of the wheel of fortune.

Three years later, Jacques Mallet du Pan agreed with Burke in his assessment of the Revolution. A noted journalist, Mallet du Pan was a constitutional monarchist, far from an unapologetic reactionary. Writing from London, his political tracts became some of the most famous and widely read of the royalist texts.² Writing in 1793 during the more radical phase of the Revolution under the sans culottes onslaught for social and economic change, Mallet du Pan criticized the radical economic and political policies of the Revolution. As far as he was concerned, the entirety of the Revolution was nothing more than an “immense lottery” which infused the “national character” with a desire for “advancement without title, success without talent, apotheosis without merit.”³ The world seemed to be turned on its head by this lottery of a revolution.

Burke and Mallet du Pan both portrayed the French Revolution as a dangerous lottery-like innovation. For them, the lottery represented destabilization, both political and socio-economic. The Revolution was nothing more than a gamble akin to buying a lottery ticket; it might lead to great things, but most likely it would be a total loss. Worse yet, the new economic and political situation served to inculcate these unstable gambling

¹ Edmund Burke, *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, edited by L. G. Mitchell (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), 192-194.

² Massimo Boffa, “Counterrevolution,” in *A Critical Dictionary of the French Revolution*, edited by François Furet and Mona Ozouf and translated by Arthur Goldhammer (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1989), 641; Robert Darnton, *The Business of Enlightenment: A Publishing History of the Encyclopédie, 1775-1800* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1979), 251, especially n. 5; William Doyle, *The Oxford History of the French Revolution* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), 310-311 and 317; Jeremy D. Popkin, *Revolutionary News: The Press in France, 1789-1799* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1990), 50 and 90.

³ Jacques Mallet du Pan, *Considérations sur la nature de la Révolution de France, et causes qui en prolongent la durée* (London, 1793), 51. “immense loterie”; “caractère national”; “d’avancement sans titre, de succès sans talents, d’apothéoses sans mérite.”

values into the broader public. With one spin of the wheel, a lottery could transform a pauper into a moneyed man with greater wealth than many of the greatest nobles. A lottery could invert the socio-economic and political world. Meanwhile, the Revolution was doing the same thing with French society and politics, elevating the nation while diminishing the king.

Lotteries were used to represent disruption and upheaval in order to delegitimize the French Revolution, but the political use of lotteries was not new to the Revolution. Perhaps no one used lotteries for political delegitimizing better than Louis-Sébastien Mercier, who made some of the most biting critiques of the Royal Lottery before the Revolution. While Burke and Mallet du Pan compared the Revolution to a lottery to undermine the Revolution, Mercier explicitly used the Royal Lottery to undermine the monarchy and the Old Regime. In the years before the Revolution, Mercier attacked the Royal Lottery and the king mercilessly in his *Tableau de Paris*. He was particularly outraged by the lottery's most novel aspect: the use of the *quine*, a wager on all five numbers drawn. Should a player win the *quine*, he would win one million times his wager—a life-altering sum for all but a very few people in France. As Mercier claimed, everyone dreamed of transforming his life by winning the *quine*, yet offering such a preposterous wager was the equivalent of the monarchy sending the players off on a search for the “philosopher’s stone.” He wrote that, “there is no better proof that there are no longer any soothsayers, magicians, or fortune-tellers than the fact that the *quine* of the Royal Lottery has yet to be guessed.”⁴

⁴ Louis-Sébastien Mercier, *Le tableau de Paris*, 12 vols. (Amsterdam, 1782), 5: 112. “la pierre philosophale”; “La preuve la plus sûre qu’il n’y a plus ni devin, ni magicien, ni diseuse de bonne-aventure, c’est que le quine de la loterie royale n’a pas encore été deviné.”

Through the Royal Lottery, Mercier argued that the monarchy fed off of people's false hope and imagination. He also suggested, however, how that hope and imagination were potentially transformative. He noted that the common people [*le petit peuple*] dream of winning the *quine* with the hope of eating at the table of the king after having been ennobled as the Marquis du Quine. By the drawing of a lot alone, one could imagine his life transformed into what had previously been unimaginable. An ordinary person could now have aspirations of eating at the king's table, something that would no doubt have caused envy among many of even the greatest nobles of France. Mercier also pointed out that the chance of winning the *quine* was one in 44 million, while the chance of being born king was one in 25 million, the estimated population of France.

"Therefore, it is more extraordinary to win the *quine* than to be king of France."⁵ This statement has extraordinary implications. Mercier implied that being king was merely a matter of chance; the king was no less and no more than any other of the 25 million French subjects. The king's position was not divinely ordained, but simply a matter of chance, the luck of the draw.

The Marquis du Quine and the King of France may have sat at the same imaginary table, but the social and political hierarchy was now complicated. With this simple statistical observation and social parody, Mercier used the preposterous odds of the Royal Lottery to belittle and undermine the political authority of the French king. In fact, Mercier suggests that the idea of the lottery undermined the whole social structure of the Old Regime. Anyone with the most modest amount of money could purchase a lottery ticket and with a spin of the wheel of fortune could be elevated to the social rank of a marquis. In parodying the Royal Lottery, Mercier meant to denounce it, yet he also

⁵ Ibid., 9: 169-170. "Donc il est plus extraordinaire d'avoir un quine que d'être Roi de France."

reveals a powerful example of the lottery's ability to diminish the authority of the monarchy. The king used the lottery as a popular and politically viable means of expanding his revenue, but as Mercier implies, it also dulled the luster of royal majesty.

It is not particularly surprising that Burke and Mallet du Pan would try to delegitimize the French Revolution by making references to lotteries. As we have seen, lotteries were often a target for denunciation by moralists. However, it is surprising that they used the language of lotteries to depict the Revolution as an interminable break from the past and tradition. The revolutionaries did, of course, self-consciously craft such a novel image. Many things were new and innovative to the Revolution, but lotteries were most decidedly not among them. To be sure, lotteries in France dated to 1539. They became institutionalized and permanent with the *trois petites loteries* in the early eighteenth century. With the Loterie de l'École Militaire in 1757, the French lottery system became more closely linked with the monarchy. And with the Royal Lottery in 1776, the French lottery system became the monarchy's lottery; the Royal Lottery was the French lottery system.

The Royal Lottery was an Old Regime institution. It was not an institution of the French Revolution. However, that is not to say that the lottery could not be revolutionary. In fact, the revolutionaries were relatively content to maintain this Old Regime lottery, simply changing its name to the National Lottery. Revolutionaries, like Lebrun, supported the lottery, albeit quietly, for many of the same reasons that the French monarchy had allowed the lottery system to grow exponentially over the course of the eighteenth century: it was a politically viable way to increase public revenue. When the duc de la Rochefoucauld argued for banishing the word "tax" [*impôt*], from the French

language, the National Assembly's Taxation Committee began to use the phrase "*contributions publiques*."⁶ The new phrase was part euphemism, but it also had a very real symbolic significance within the discursive context of the Revolution. Under the revolutionary government, it was thought that citizens would willingly contribute resources to the public coffers because of the changed political context in which every individual was now vested in the social contract. The king had much the same idea for the Royal Lottery. He hoped that subjects would willingly contribute resources through the purchase of lottery tickets. Thus, it is not surprising that the revolutionaries would maintain the National Lottery.

The National Lottery was finally abolished in November 1793. By that time, economic collapse and hyperinflation had made the lottery of little fiscal value. The National Convention was also facing political pressure from the *sans culottes* and *enragés*, who were calling for centralized economic control. With nothing to gain by keeping it, the Convention suppressed the National Lottery. After the Terror was overthrown, the Directory worked to create political and economic stability in France. That meant at least some modicum of appearance of public support as well as a source of revenue other than simply printing money. Among other things, they choose to restore the National Lottery. Most of the debate took place in 1796 and early 1797, and the debate followed much the same pattern as in the earlier part of the Revolution.⁷

In the end, the argument that seemed most persuasive was much the same as that which prevailed under the monarchy and in the early years of the Revolution: the public wanted to play. Officials from the Paris police noted that public "opinion is favourable to

⁶ Michael Kwass, *Privilege and the Politics of Taxation in Eighteenth-Century France: Liberté, Égalité, Fiscalité* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 1.

⁷ Bruno Bernard, ed., *Lotteries in Europe: Five Centuries of History* (Brussels, 1995), 79-80 and 111.

the restoration of a national lottery.”⁸ In fact, what was proposed was not just a national lottery, but a full, unmitigated “reestablishment of the National Lottery.” What is most striking about the announcement of the Directory’s decision in the *Moniteur universel* is the unabashed embrace of the old institution. In explaining how the lottery would work, the decree noted that “the lottery is, as it was at the time of its suppression, composed of 90 numbers.” Furthermore, “all odds and combinations are the same as they were before the suppression of this lottery,” and the drawings would be done by “the method which was always used and followed at the time of the suppression.”⁹ The Royal Lottery had returned.

⁸ Quoted in Bernard, *Lotteries in Europe*, 80.

⁹ *Réimpression de l’ancien Moniteur*, 32 vols. (Paris, 1858-1870), vol. 29: 36-37, October 13, 1797. “La loterie est, comme elle était à l’époque de sa suppression, composée de quatre-vingt-dix nombres.”; “toutes les chances et les combinaisons sont les mêmes qu’elles étaient lors de la suppression de cette loterie.”; “la méthode qui s’est toujours observée et qui suivait à l’époque de la suppression.”

Appendices

Appendix 1: Ticket Sales and Profits for the Loterie de Saint-Sulpice¹

Year	Number of Tickets Sold	Revenue from Tickets Sales (in livres)	Profit to Saint-Sulpice (in livres)	Profit to Sainte-Geneviève (in livres)
1745	1,537,000	1,537,000	230,550	
1746	1,659,000	1,659,000	248,850	
1747	1,936,000	1,936,000	290,400	
1748	2,484,000	2,484,000	372,600	
1749	2,891,000	2,891,000	433,650	
1750	3,382,000	3,382,000	507,300	
1751	3,411,000	3,411,000	511,650	
1752	3,733,000	3,733,000	559,950	
1753	3,634,000	3,634,000	545,100	
1754	3,612,000	3,612,000	541,800	
1755 ²	2,525,000	2,907,000	378,750	191,000
1756	2,600,000	3,120,000	390,000	260,000
1757	2,690,000	3,228,000	403,500	269,000
1758	2,350,000	2,820,000	352,500	235,000
1759	2,338,000	2,805,600	350,700	233,800
1760	2,059,000	2,470,800	308,850	205,900
1761	1,976,000	2,352,000	296,400	197,600
1762	1,838,000	2,205,600	275,700	183,800
1763	1,703,000	2,043,600	255,450	170,300
1764	1,950,000	2,340,000	292,500	195,000
1765	2,157,500	2,589,000	323,625	215,750

¹ This table is compiled from AN, F12 795 “Releve des Benefices de la Loterie de St. Sulpice” for the years 1745 to 1761. The last few years are compiled from AN, G9 114 “4 Autres Comparaisons.” When necessary I have derived the numbers given in the table from other numbers given in the archives. There are several minor inconsistencies between the records in the two archive collections. As a rule, I used the numbers from the F12 795 collection because they seem to be more thorough and accurate. There were also numerous minor mathematical mistakes in the calculations of the G9 114 records. When there was an inconsistency between the two I used the number that seemed most likely to be accurate. None of the inconsistencies would have changed any of the numbers by more than a couple percentage points, and most of the numbers are consistent.

² On March 1, 1755, the price of the tickets increased to 24 sous in order to benefit the building of Sainte-Geneviève. Of that 4 sous, 2 sous went directly to the profit of Sainte-Geneviève and the other 2 sous went to the winning lots. So the numbers for 1755 represent the first two months of tickets sold at 20 sous and the last ten months at 24 sous and the profits for Sainte-Geneviève shown here in the table are for the last ten months of the year only.

Appendix 2: Ticket Sales and Profits for the Loterie des Enfants Trouvés³

Year	Number of Tickets Sold	Revenue from Tickets Sales (in livres)	Profit to the Hôpital des Enfants Trouvés (in livres)	Profit to Sainte-Geneviève (in livres)
1745	1,138,000	1,138,000	170,700	
1746	1,240,000	1,240,000	186,000	
1747	1,648,000	1,648,000	247,200	
1748	1,728,000	1,728,000	259,200	
1749	1,991,000	1,991,000	298,650	
1750	2,256,000	2,256,000	338,400	
1751	2,303,000	2,303,000	345,450	
1752	2,307,000	2,307,000	346,050	
1753	2,151,000	2,151,000	322,000	
1754	1,988,000	1,988,000	298,200	
1755 ⁴	1,260,000	1,512,000	189,000	93,100
1756	1,279,000	1,534,800	191,850	127,900
1757	1,174,000	1,408,800	176,100	117,400
1758	1,112,000	1,334,400	166,800	111,200
1759	1,185,000	1,422,000	177,750	118,500
1760	979,000	1,174,800	146,850	97,900
1761	843,000	1,011,600	126,450	84,300
1762	749,000	898,800	112,350	74,900
1763	676,000	811,200	101,400	67,600
1764	777,000	932,400	116,550	77,700
1765	846,000	1,015,200	126,900	84,600

³ This table is compiled from AN, F12 795 “Releve des Benefices de la Loterie des Enfants Trouvés” and from AN, G9 114 “4 Autres Comparaisons.” As with Table 2.1, when necessary I have derived the numbers given in the table from other numbers given in the archives. Also as with Table 2.1, I have resolved as best as possible the occasional minor inconsistencies between the records in the two archive collections.

⁴ Just as with the Loterie de Saint-Sulpice, the price of the tickets increased on March 1, 1755 from 20 sous to 24 sous. Half of the new money raised went to benefit the rebuilding of Sainte-Geneviève and the other half went to the winning lots. Just as with the Loterie de Saint-Sulpice, the sales for 1755 represent the first two months of the year of tickets sold for 20 sous and the last ten drawings of the year for 24 sous.

Appendix 3: Ticket Sales and Profits for the Loterie des Communautés Religieuses⁵

Year	Number of Tickets Sold	Revenue from Tickets Sales (in livres)	Profit to the Communautés Religieuses (in livres)	Profit to Sainte-Geneviève (in livres)
1745	1,127,000	1,127,000	169,050	
1746	1,249,000	1,249,000	187,350	
1747	1,440,000	1,440,000	216,000	
1748	1,691,000	1,691,000	253,650	
1749	1,939,000	1,939,000	290,850	
1750	2,156,000	2,156,000	323,400	
1751	2,212,000	2,212,000	331,800	
1752	2,289,000	2,289,000	343,350	
1753	2,170,000	2,170,000	325,500	
1754	2,074,000	2,074,000	311,100	
1755 ⁶	1,262,000	1,448,000	189,300	93,000
1756	1,218,000	1,461,600	182,700	121,800
1757	1,158,000	1,389,600	173,700	115,800
1758	1,139,000	1,366,800	170,850	113,900
1759	1,264,000	1,516,800	189,600	126,400
1760	979,000	1,174,800	146,850	97,900
1761	814,000	976,800	122,100	81,400
1762	699,000	838,800	104,850	69,900
1763 ⁷	668,000	801,600	100,200	66,800
1764	668,000	801,600	100,200	66,800
1765	744,000	892,800	111,600	74,400

⁵ This table is compiled from AN, F12 795 “Releve des Benefices de la Loterie des Communautés Religieuses” and from AN, G9 114 “4 Autres Comparaisons.” As with Table 2.1 and Table 2.2, when necessary I have derived the numbers given in the table from other numbers given in the archives. Also as with Table 2.1 and Table 2.2, I have resolved as best as possible the occasional minor inconsistencies between the records in the two archive collections.

⁶ Just as with the Loterie de Saint-Sulpice and the Loterie des Enfants Trouvés, the price of the tickets increased on March 1, 1755 from 20 sous to 24 sous. Half of the new money raised went to benefit the rebuilding of Sainte-Geneviève and the other half went to the winning lots. Just as with the other two lotteries, the sales for 1755 represent the first two months of the year of tickets sold for 20 sous and the last ten drawings of the year for 24 sous.

⁷ The numbers for 1763 and 1764 are the same because the documents I have from AN, G9 114 “4 Autres Comparaisons” almost always give the figures for the Loterie des Communautés Religieuses by pairing them in groups of two years. The figures are either given as a total for the two years or as an average for the two years. This was also the case with the years 1761 and 1762, but I was able to find the exact amount for 1761 from the records in AN, F12 795 and was thus able to figure the exact amount for 1762 from the total given for the pairing of 1761 and 1762. I have included in the table the averaged amount between the two years. The year 1765 was not paired with another year.

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