

Mutiny at Louisbourg, December 1744

by Allan GREER*

I

Late in December, 1744, a mutiny erupted in the fortress of Louisbourg, capital of the French colony of Isle Royale. With only a few exceptions, all the soldiers in the garrison turned on their officers, threatening to kill them and ransack the town. Faced with such complete rebellion, the local authorities could only give into the insurgents' demands. As a result, no blood was spilled and the openly violent confrontation was short-lived. Nevertheless, this episode seems to be a noteworthy event in the military history of the eighteenth-century French empire. Unlike other contemporary mutinies, it occurred in wartime and involved the nearly unanimous participation of the soldiery. Certainly the French authorities in the Marine ministry considered it a serious matter and, as a result, some mutineers were severely punished at Rochefort where the garrison was quartered after Louisbourg surrendered to the English in June, 1745. The purpose of this essay will be, first of all, to reconstruct the events of the mutiny, not a simple task since the only useable sources, court-martial transcripts and the reports of officers and colonial officials, are all the special pleas of men anxious to save their lives or their careers. Secondly, an attempt will be made to outline the long-term and immediate causes of the revolt. This involves an examination of some of the peculiar characteristics of military life in Louisbourg in the decades preceding the outbreak.

The colony of Isle Royale was established in 1713, although Louisbourg had only been its capital for 25 years by 1744. Administrative hub and centre of the fisheries that were the mainstay of the island's economy, Louisbourg was also a military stronghold. Its massive stone fortifications were designed to protect the colony and guard the maritime approaches to Canada. In the year of the mutiny, the Isle Royale garrison was made up of nine companies of *troupes de la marine*, or *compagnies franches de la marine*, one of them a special artillery company, together with 150 men from the Swiss Karrer regiment. There were about 600-650 men in all and the majority (perhaps 525-575) were concentrated in the capital, leaving 75 soldiers to man the colony's isolated outposts. Soldiers — that is, military personnel excluding officers — made up about one quarter of Louisbourg's population when a census was taken in 1737. The most important organizational unit in the garrison was the company. Each *compagnie franche* was commanded and administered by a captain who was fairly autonomous, although subordinate to the *état-major*. This body included the town major and his assistants and the commanding officer, who also generally acted as governor of the colony.

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The Swiss contingent with its peculiar organization and special privileges was a complicating element in the garrison. It apparently operated as a large company with three subaltern officers and almost 150 men all under the command of a *capitaine-lieutenant*. The latter, usually referred to as the "Swiss commandant," owed allegiance to his colonel who resided at the regiment's base in France, but he was also subject to the control of the colonial *état-major*. Colonel Karrer was bound by contract to maintain his regiment in the service of the Marine ministry in return for a monthly payment of 16 *livres* per man.¹ In principle, he was responsible for recruiting, equipping, and paying his officers and men. However, in practice, part of the 16 *livres* per man-month owed to Karrer was remitted directly to his officers stationed at Isle Royale for distribution as wages to the troops. The French authorities at Louisbourg gave rations to the Swiss soldiers like those issued to the men of the *troupes de la marine*. The cost of this food was retained in the colonial treasury. In effect, the Swiss soldiers paid for their rations through wage deductions exactly as the French did, even though Colonel Karrer was theoretically responsible for their upkeep and pay. Karrer's contract guaranteed his regiment certain special privileges, notably judicial autonomy. Most of these were common to all Swiss regiments in the French service. The special status of the Karrer contingent at Louisbourg was often a source of annoyance to the military and civilian administrators of the colony. Bitter disputes occasionally arose when the Swiss officers felt their rights were threatened.²

II

Isle Royale had been at peace with its neighbours during the two decades and more that the fortifications of Louisbourg were under construction but, in the spring of 1744, war broke out between France and England. In the North American possessions of the two belligerents, privateers were soon equipped to prey on enemy shipping and consequently one of the first effects that the war produced in Louisbourg was a shortage of provisions and other supplies. The colony was heavily dependent on imported commodities but French traders hesitated to send their ships across the Atlantic where they might be captured. In Canada, another major supplier of foodstuffs, harvests were poor. To make matters worse in Louisbourg, hundreds of British prisoners captured by the colony's raiders had to be fed in the summer and autumn. More than most other groups however, the soldiers of the garrison, both French and Swiss, were sheltered from the effects of shortages of this kind. In return for a constant deduction from their pay that was unaffected by market fluctuations, the men received rations from the large stocks of flour, salt pork and other staples that the government maintained for their consumption. Occasionally, in times of food shortages, they would be given reduced

¹ Archives Nationales, Archives de la Marine (hereafter cited as AM), A1, Art. 69, pièce 33, *Capitulation du Régiment Suisse de Karrer*, 25 Sept., 1731.

² See, for example, Archives Nationales, Archives des Colonies (hereafter cited as AC), C11B, Vol. 23, fols. 60-64, Duquesnel to Minister, 19 Oct., 1741.

rations or biscuit instead of bread so that the authorities could distribute supplies from the king's storehouse to needy civilians. Often the problem was one of food quality rather than quantity and soldiers frequently complained when their bread was made of rotten flour mixed with good.³ Thus, it was not an unprecedented development when late in 1744 the *commissaire-ordonnateur* François Bigot, the colony's highest ranking civilian official, ordered the public sale of foodstuffs from the government storehouse and the soldiers, whose rations were still not reduced, received inferior provisions as a result.

The event that pushed the garrison to revolt occurred about one week before Christmas when the troops received their fortnightly issue of "vegetables." These were the dried peas and beans which were the major ingredient of the soup that formed the soldiers' evening meal. In this case, they were rotten and completely inedible. Some men apparently became ill from eating them but those who simply did without and ate only their bread ration and their spruce beer were in no danger of starving.⁴ What infuriated the troops was the knowledge that there were good vegetables in the storehouse but that these were being sold to be townspeople; meanwhile, they received swills which they were obliged to pay for through wage deductions. A deputation of Swiss soldiers therefore attempted to return the bad vegetables in exchange for good ones but was rebuffed by the keeper of the royal storehouse.⁵ Complaints were made to the commander of the Karrer detachment, Gabriel Schönherr, but they were unavailing.⁶

About 22 or 23 December, a petition addressed to Louis Dupont Duchambon, the acting garrison commanding officer, was drawn up. Some Swiss soldiers visited the barrack-rooms of the *troupes de la marine* and secured the support of some of the French troops.⁷ Thus the petition read, "A large number of French and Swiss soldiers very respectfully beg you..." although it seems that only the Swiss, and especially Abraham Dupâquier, Joseph Renard and Laurent Soly, played an active role at this stage. Soly, of unknown nationality, had previously served in the Spanish army and elsewhere. He was killed or captured early in the

³ See, for example, *ibid.*, Vol. 20, fols. 104-05, de Bourville to Minister, 24 Dec., 1738.

⁴ Three years earlier, they had gone without vegetables for an extended period although their bread ration was reduced at the same time. *Ibid.*, Vol. 24, fols. 87-89v, Bigot to Minister, 18 June, 1742.

⁵ Archives de la Guerre, Archives du Service Historique de l'Armée (hereafter cited as A.S.H.A.), XI *Déposition juridique reçue par ordre de Monsieur de Karrer... de Mrs. les officiers des détachements de la compagnie colonelle... en garnison cy devant à Louisbourg... à l'occasion de l'émeute à l'Isle Royale au mois de décembre 1744*, 29 Aug., 1745 (hereafter cited as "Rasser deposition.>"). The French may also have participated; the document is not precise on this point.

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ AC, C7, 272, dossier Joseph Renard, transcript of the court-martial of Joseph Renard, 7 Dec., 1745 (hereafter cited as "Renard court-martial."); *ibid.*, copy of the petition of a number of soldiers addressed to Duchambon, [22-23?] Dec., 1744 (hereafter cited as "Soldiers' Petition.>").

siege of 1745 and therefore was never brought to trial.⁸ Renard was 33 years old, a Catholic and was born in German Lorraine.⁹ Most active of the three, it seems, was Dupâquier, a 25 year old native of Neuchatel. His family's social standing cannot have been humble as his father was previously lieutenant-colonel in a Swiss regiment in the service of the king of Sardinia.¹⁰ It was apparently he who was chiefly responsible for composing the petition. Fortunately a copy has been preserved and a reading of it makes it evident that rotten vegetables was not the only issue that annoyed the soldiers. In a deferential yet somewhat menacing tone, this document begins with complaints about the vegetables and then proceeds to allude to a number of other grievances after the general observation. *...vous sçavez Monsieur que l'Injustice regne a toutes mains en ce pays...*¹¹

This petition was not handed over to the commandant immediately, no doubt because the soldiers did not expect it would have any more effect than the complaints to Schönherr if it were submitted in the regular way. Instead, plans were made for a peaceful assembly where it would be presented and the authorities forced to take notice. Joseph Renard testified at his court-martial that there was no question of assembling at the time the petition was drawn up and he and Dupâquier insisted that the idea of bringing the troops out in a mass only occurred to them on the evening before the mutiny. Their testimony seems suspect however. They had every reason to portray their actions as a relatively sudden outburst (all the less culpable since they had been drinking the night of the twenty-sixth) rather than as a premeditated plot. However, the Swiss sergeant Christophe Jout admitted that Soly and Renard had spoken to him the day before Christmas of plans for a peaceful protest gathering.¹² The judges who later tried these men did not, in fact, consider it necessary to establish the existence of a plot before December 26 in order to convict them and showed no interest in pursuing this question. The sources therefore give no indication as to how elaborate the plot was in the day or two before and after Christmas, how many soldiers were privy to it, whether the French were involved or whether a decision was made to bear arms at the projected assembly.

Whenever the plot was hatched, it was the evening of 26 December that Soly, Renard and Dupâquier went from room to room in the Swiss section of the barracks asking the men to join them, *"pour s'assembler le landemain afin de demander a leurs off.^{rs} de leur procurer Justice sur les Vivres qui leurs Etoient dus..."*¹³ Some of the men were sleeping but Renard made a list of the names of those who agreed to participate.

⁸ Renard court-martial.

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ AC, E, 157, dossier Abraham Dupâquier, transcript of the court-martial of Abraham Dupâquier, 9 Dec., 1745 (hereafter cited as "Dupâquier court-martial.").

¹¹ Soldiers' Petition.

¹² AC, E, 233, dossier Christophe Jout, transcript of the court-martial of Christophe Jout, 9 Dec., 1745 (hereafter cited as "Jout court-martial.").

¹³ Renard court-martial.

Afterwards, Renard and Dupâquier were nominated to go to speak with the French soldiers who occupied adjoining rooms.¹⁴ Dupâquier was sent because he "knew the French," apparently a rare quality for a member of the Karrer detachment. He admitted to having communicated with only a few men in two of the eight French companies and he claims that he merely informed them of the Swiss plans for an assembly. The three leaders then returned to their room and remained awake for the rest of the night.

Next morning, the twenty-seventh, at about six o'clock, the Swiss began assembling behind the barracks building in the courtyard enclosed by the King's Bastion. Although this gathering was completely unauthorized and illegal, it was effected through the use of normal military procedures and routine discipline. The sergeants did not appear as most of them had their own dwellings in the town. However, a corporal named du Croix, who had apparently not been involved in the plans, took charge and arranged the men in their ranks, ordered the drummers to beat out the signal for the assembly and returned to the barracks to order those who had not yet appeared to fall in.¹⁵ He even overruled one of the leading organizers, Joseph Renard, and ordered him to return to his place when the latter began to take some initiative. Dupâquier and Renard later declared at the court-martial that they had not intended to carry arms but had changed their minds when all the others went for their guns after a voice in the crowd had urged them to "give more weight to their just demands." They may well have been lying. In any case, the officer who was eventually fetched by the first sergeant found himself facing almost the entire Karerr detachment, armed and in battle formation.

Schönherr was sick at the time and it was Ensign Rasser, the second Swiss officer, who first met the rebellious troops.¹⁶ When the drumming ceased Rasser asked for an explanation and was handed a note which outlined the men's grievances.¹⁷ He examined this and then spoke with a few individual soldiers, one by one, about their complaints. When the ensign recalled the scene eight months later, he remembered the troops' orderly and respectful behavior and their assurances that they had no intention of committing violent actions or of neglecting their duties to their superiors; they wished only "*de Reclamer leur Justice des Vexations qu'on leur Faisoit Journallement...*"¹⁸ Rasser mentioned three specific grievances in this affidavit and prominent among them was the problem of

¹⁴ Dupâquier court-martial.

¹⁵ AC. E. 145, dossier Jean-Baptiste du Croix, transcript of the court-martial of Jean-Baptiste du Croix, 7 Dec., 1745 (hereafter cited as "du Croix court-martial.").

¹⁶ Rasser deposition.

¹⁷ Renard court-martial; Dupâquier court-martial. The testimony does not make it clear whether this was the same petition to Duchambon that was written several days earlier. Dupâquier testified that he wrote a note outlining grievances the morning of the demonstration. He may have been lying in order to be consistent with his story that there was no plot before 26 December. Since the specific complaints that Rasser recalled were not the same as those listed in the petition to Duchambon, it is quite possible that Dupâquier drew up a second petition shortly before the mutiny began.

¹⁸ Rasser deposition.

the rotten vegetables. There was also a complaint about work the soldiers were forced to perform without wages for the king's service and for private individuals. Lastly, the men asked for compensation for work they had done on an expedition against Canso earlier in the year and for the pillage they had been promised but had never received.¹⁹

The complaint about unpaid labour was not a new one for the Swiss. In 1727 they had contested the custom of "*piquoit*" duty by which the *état-major* made soldiers coming off guard duty spend a few hours cleaning the barracks or doing chores in the government storehouse.²⁰ The practice persisted however and Joseph Renard complained of having to fetch wood and clean the governor's latrine.²¹ Men were often obliged to work without remuneration for their own officers as well.²² Both Renard and Dupâquier declared at their court-martials that such "*ouvrages extraordinaires*" were a major source of dissatisfaction.

The treatment of the soldiers who took part in the Canso raid was a specific case that aroused the anger of both French and Swiss troops. Soon after war broke out in March, 1744, plans had been made to capture this nearby English fishing post. In its aims and its organization, the Canso expedition bore more resemblance to a privateering venture than to a normal military campaign.²³ It was largely financed by merchants and government officials and was composed of soldiers from the Louisbourg garrison as well as over 200 sailors all under the command of Dupont Du-vivier, an influential officer of the *troupes de la marine*. Duquesnel, the colony's governor, convinced 80 French soldiers and 37 Swiss to volunteer for the mission with the promise that they would have a share of the booty.²⁴ A small fleet left Louisbourg the twentieth of May and quickly captured Canso and a British naval sloop after a short exchange of cannon fire.²⁵ The soldiers saw no action until they landed and were ordered to load quantities of codfish, government stores and the private effects of the British inhabitants into the boats. When some hesitated they were roughly treated by their officers. "*Le moindre des Misérables seroit mieux traité parmi des barbares,*" wrote the men who served on board one of the boats.²⁶ As soon as the victorious party returned to Louisbourg, the ships' officers and sailors and the garrison officers who had

¹⁹ These are the same three complaints that Renard and Dupâquier later mentioned at their court-martials.

²⁰ AC, C11B, Vol. 9, fols. 72-78v, St-Ovide to Minister, 21 Nov., 1727.

²¹ Renard court-martial.

²² Antony Steur seems to have been in this case when he passed the winter of 1739 at Spanish Bay hunting partridges for the benefit of Cailly, the Swiss commander. AC, Outremer, G2, Vol. 185, fols. 379-424, trial of Jean Larue dit le Gascon, accused of murder, 16 Mar. — 30 Apr., 1739. For evidence of similar illicit practices in the French companies, see AC, C11B, Vol. 11, fols. 61-68, de Mézy to Minister, 4 Dec., 1730.

²³ George Juan DE ULLOA And Antonio DE ULLOA, *A Voyage to South America* (trans. J. Hopkins) vol. II (London: 1806), p. 380.

²⁴ AC, F3, Vol. 50, fol. 415, an account of the Canso expedition, n.s., n.d. [1744].

²⁵ G.A. RAWLYK, *Yankees at Louisbourg* (Orono, Maine: 1967), pp. 3-5.

²⁶ AC, Outremer, G2, Vol. 188, fols. 304-05, Requette à M. Bigot de Marin Halest et 25 autres volontaires, 8 Nov., 1744.

accompanied them made off with most of the plunder before anything was turned over to the courts to be distributed as lawful prize. In the end, the soldiers received nothing for their trouble. Governor Duquesnel, who had guaranteed them a share of the spoils, died on 9 October and, although one group of soldiers addressed a petition to the *ordonnateur* in November, they received no satisfaction.²⁷

Rasser listened to these grievances in the courtyard of the citadel. He promised only to communicate them to his superior, Schönherr. Then, warning the men not to repeat their demonstration, he made them present arms and ordered them to return to the barracks and stay there. This done, the ensign rushed to Schönherr's bedside and reported the disturbance. The senior officer told Rasser to ask de la Perelle, the town major, to order the replacement of the bad vegetables. But already it was too late. As he emerged from Schönherr's house, the drums were beating again. This time it was the French sounding the general alarm. After their officer had left, it seems, some Swiss soldiers had gone to the other side of the barracks and reproached the French as cowards for not joining in the demonstration. The men of the *troupes de la marine* may have been slow to act but once they took up the challenge they were far less restrained than the others. With their intervention the relatively mild protest was transformed into a serious revolt.

Soldiers, both French and Swiss, poured out into the courtyard equipped for battle. The drummers continued to beat the *générale* and, as their comrades assembled, they marched out of the citadel²⁸ surrounded by an escort with bayonets fixed. As this body passed through the streets of the town, the garrison officers, who for the most part lived in private houses, were roused by what must have sounded like a signal that the fortress was under attack. Coming to the citadel to investigate, they found themselves facing the muskets of men who threatened to "blow their heads off" if they entered the enclosure.²⁹ These were the ten soldiers, French and Swiss, who had spent the night on routine guard duty at the entrance to the citadel under the command of the Swiss sergeant, Christophe Jout. Soly and Renard had spoken with him three days earlier about their plans for a demonstration and, the morning of the mutiny, Jout ordered his sentries not to allow any officers or civilians to pass. As the party of drummers marched by the guard post, he was heard to say, "*Les françois commencent a s'animer et ils font mieux les choses que les nôtres Etant armés Bayonnette au Bout fusil.*"³⁰

Eventually a number of Officers managed to elude the sentries and gain entry to the courtyard. Among them was Ensign Rasser who described the scene inside as one of tumult and disorder. The soldiers talked

²⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁸ The King's Bastion and the barracks building formed an enclosed citadel usually referred to in French as "*le fort.*" The "fortress," on the other hand, was the town together with the entire system of fortifications.

²⁹ Rasser deposition.

³⁰ Jout court-martial.

openly of killing all the officers and burning the town. The officers present tried desperately with bravado and cajoling to regain control of their companies. According to Rasser, he brought the Karrer contingent to obedience first while the French were still pointing guns at their officers and threatening to shoot if their demands were not met.³¹ Meanwhile, Major de la Perelle was following the drummers and their escort through the town vainly ordering them to halt. At one point, he attempted to stand in their path but he was picked up roughly and carried thirty paces.³² Giving up at length, he went to the citadel where by now the atmosphere had cooled somewhat. The officers had apparently agreed to accept all the rebels' demands and the men showed their willingness to recognize de la Perelle's authority by following, more or less, his parade-ground commands.

Before the major's arrival, acting Governor Duchambon, the supreme military authority in the colony, had appeared at the citadel and surrendered to the troops' demands. Duchambon had no alternative but capitulation. His garrison, almost to a man, was in open revolt.³³ At the best of times, help from France or Canada would take months to arrive but, given the war and British command of the seas, the colony was particularly isolated in 1744. Moreover, there was no alternative force within the colony that could dream of opposing the rebels, as the Isle Royale militia, unlike its Canadian counterpart, was small and ineffective. The promise to redress all grievances quelled the violence, but the soldiers remained uneasy. Duchambon and Bigot, writing to the Minister of Marine four days later, declared that the complaints of the French and the Swiss were identical but the specific demands they mentioned as having come from the French troops were not the same as those presented to Rasser by the Swiss. The situation was confused and a great variety of demands were apparently put forward. The governor and *ordonnateur* recorded three of them: (1) an increase in the issue of firewood and the return to the soldiers of five cords of wood confiscated for theft; (2) the immediate distribution of the rations that some of the men had missed cause they were away participating in the Canso attack and in a later expedition against Port Royal, and (3) the reimbursement of the clothing deduction that had been taken from the wages of more than 100 French recruits who had arrived in 1741 but never received the uniforms it was supposed to have paid for.³⁴

The second demand in Duchambon's and Bigot's list was not repeated in any other document. It is possible that, in reporting to the minister, they may have misinterpreted or misrepresented much more serious complaints about the treatment of volunteers during and after the Canso

³¹ Rasser deposition.

³² AC. C11B, Vol. 26, fols: 231-34, "*Copie de la Lettre ecrite a Mr. le Comte de Maurepas par Mrs. Duchambon et Bigot a Louisbourg le 3^e Xbre 1744*," [31 Dec., 1744] (hereafter cited as "Duchambon's and Bigot's letter.')

³³ Duchambon and Bigot reported that only the French sergeants and the thirty men of the elite artillery company refused to join in the mutiny. *Ibid.*

³⁴ *Ibid.*

raid. At any rate, the only contemporary account of the mutiny not written by an observer directly involved in the events considered injustices committed against the Canso volunteers to be the major grievance of all the soldiers.³⁵ The complaint about the missing uniforms was a uniquely French affair but it had much in common with the rotten vegetables problem which aroused the anger of both French and Swiss troops. The soldiers had often endured with patience delays and shortages in the issue of military supplies and allowances but they were annoyed that wage deductions were not adjusted when items they paid for were not delivered.

The soldiers' demand for more firewood cannot have come as a surprise to the local authorities as they had long been aware that fuel supplies were inadequate. Within a few years of founding of Louisbourg the scrubby spruce forest had been stripped from all the country within three miles. The minister in France was eventually persuaded to allow wood to be purchased for the garrison but only at the rate of one half cord per man even though about twice that quantity was required to last through the long Cape Breton winter.³⁶ The men were therefore obliged to cut and transport half their fuel and each year several of them contracted frostbite and injured themselves scrambling over the brush and stumps in order to fetch a few logs of what was in fact inferior firewood. The exceptionally cold winter that had arrived earlier than usual in 1744 must have made the mutineers' demand for an adequate fuel supply especially emphatic.³⁷ As for the confiscation before Christmas of five cords of "stolen" wood, the soldiers' petition to Duchambon alluded to this event in rather different terms. It seems that a group of soldiers returning to the town with a load of firewood were met by some officers claiming to own the land where it had been cut. The officers ordered them to turn over the wood and then broke the sledge they had used to carry it.³⁸

Military discipline and punishment, wages, the routine hardships of service and the dangers of war do not seem to have been issues for the mutinous soldiers. Instead, their objectives were extremely modest. They showed no desire in their words or actions to modify the military system or to subvert the hierarchical structure of the garrison except as a temporary emergency measure. All the recorded grievances that were brought up by the French and the Swiss were essentially complaints about material losses and the redress the men sought was monetary compensation.

Consequently, one of the rebels' first acts was to make use of the established sentry posts in the town to secure control of the government storehouses and the house of François Bigot, the man in charge of finances and guardian of the colonial treasury.³⁹ The governor and the offi-

³⁵ ANON., *Lettre d'un Habitant de Louisbourg* (trans., ed., G.M. Wrong) (Toronto: 1897), p. 34.

³⁶ AC, C11B, Vol. 23, fols. 13-14v, Duquesnel and Bigot to Minister, 10 Oct., 1741.

³⁷ DE ULLOA, *op. cit.*, p. 375.

³⁸ Soldiers' Petition.

³⁹ ANON., *Mémoire pour Messire François Bigot, ci-devant Intendant de Justice, Police, Finance & Marine en Canada, Accusé: contre Monsieur le Procureur-General du Roi en la Commission, Accusateur*, vol. 1 (Paris: 1763), pp. 7-9.

cers had promised to give in to the soldiers' demands but it was up to Bigot to make the actual payments. Of course, had they wished, the mutineers could simply have seized what they wanted but, despite repeated threats to do so, they never undertook such bold action. Apparently interpreting Duchambon's surrender as implicit recognition that their demands were justified, the soldiers ended their complete and open defiance of the officers and proceeded to secure what they felt was legitimately theirs in a fairly orderly fashion.

A deputation went to call on Bigot to arrange for the fulfillment of the officers' promises and presented the *commissaire-ordonnateur* with accounts of sums due to all the men for injustices committed over the past few years. It is not clear how long the negotiations lasted but the deputies apparently returned on several occasions over a period of months. Bigot later bragged of how he stalled and prevaricated with the representatives, "*les amusant de belles promesses*" and avoiding payment for as long as possible until frightened into submission by veiled threats against his life.⁴⁰ His own accounts indicate that only 3000 *livres* were given to the men. This would have amounted to an average of about six *livres*, the price of three or four bottles of wine, for each man in the garrison.⁴¹

Although there were no further dramatic confrontations like the one that took place on the morning of 27 December, Louisbourg remained in a state of alarm in the days that followed. The civilian population was terrified as groups of soldiers spoke openly of massacres and destruction and engaged in a form of *taxation populaire*, threatening merchants with swords and forcing them to sell them goods at what they considered a "just price."⁴² Bigot and Duchambon described this situation when they first reported their predicament to the minister on 31 December. Their letter had a tone of urgency that verged on panic: "Nous sommes ici leurs Esclaves, ils font tout le mal qu'ils veulent."⁴³ Bigot outlined the elaborate precautions he took to keep this communication and its destination a secret. He was convinced that the troops would sack the town and turn it over to the English if they knew he was requesting that an armed force be sent from France to punish the rebels. And yet the fact that no one was killed or even injured, the absence in the records of complaints from merchants who actually sustained losses and, most of all, the soldiers' subsequent conduct during the siege, all lead to the conclusion that these men

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 8.

⁴¹ AC, C11C, Vol. 12, fol. 167, "*Bordereaux de la recette et dépense faite à l'Isle Royale pendant l'année [1744]*," 2 Apr., 1746.

⁴² Price-setting of this sort was a common feature of eighteenth-century insurrections, especially bread riots in England and France. See, George RUDÉ, *The Crowd in History; a Study of Popular Disturbances in France and England* (New York: 1964), especially pp. 19-32; E. P. THOMPSON, "The Moral Economy of the English Crowd in the Eighteenth Century," *Past and Present*, no. 50 (Feb., 1971), 76-136. Only one account of the mutiny (Duchambon's and Bigot's letter) reports any manifestation of this type of behavior. The other documents mention vague threats to sack the town but they give no evidence of hostility on the part of the soldiers directed specifically against the merchants.

⁴³ Duchambon's and Bigot's letter.

were remarkably restrained in the use of every weapon except their mouths. Certainly the soldiers were extremely angry. The situation was an explosive one that could easily have erupted into open violence but the mutineers seemed well aware that their bravado and threats frightened the authorities and had the effect of advancing their own interests. Moreover, it was no accident that the mutiny occurred at a time when the state of war and rumours of impending British attack strengthened the soldiers' position by making the officers and colonial officials feel all the more vulnerable.

Unfortunately, it is impossible to discover exactly what happened in the early months of 1745 since the best sources, the court-martials and Ensign Rasser's deposition, concentrate exclusively on the period up to and including the morning of the assembly. For the courts of military justice, it was this act of defying and threatening officers that constituted the crime of mutiny and they showed no interest in its aftermath. However, according to François Bigot, the only informant for the later period, the revolt lasted five months. *Tout l'hiver se passa dans cette émotion*, he wrote, stating elsewhere that the troops *n'avoient pour ainsy dire reconnu aucune autorité* from December to May, 1745.⁴⁴ Bigot of course is not the most trustworthy of witnesses and he had an obvious interest in exaggerating the duration of the mutiny and his own role in handling it. It would be more accurate to describe this period as one of latent rather than open revolt. The men had recognized the officers' authority after their capitulation in the courtyard, but the latter must have exercised that authority with the greatest of caution. Unwilling to overturn the established hierarchy, the soldiers were nevertheless in a position of unaccustomed power at this time and they used the threat of violence to ensure that those in command treated them fairly according to their own standards. The officers and civilian officials did not dare oppose them and even avoided using *le ton de leurs places*.⁴⁵ This was hardly a normal situation and, in Bigot's eyes, it constituted continued revolt.

Nor do we know how the soldiers organized themselves at this stage, how they chose their representatives or how they managed the business of compiling their demands for compensation and distributing the *procedes*. Bigot mentions in passing that the men elected their own officers and he describes the deputies who negotiated with him simply as *les plus séditieux*.⁴⁶ He felt that most of the rebel leaders were Swiss and that Abraham Dupâquier was most prominent among them. Bigot noted no dissension between the men of the *troupes de la marine* and those of the Karrer regiment and, in fact, he gives the impression that they co-operated more fully in the period of negotiations than they had earlier. In any case, whatever the state of relations within the garrison may have been, the entire

⁴⁴ Anon., *Memoire pour Messire François Bigot...*, I, p. 8; AC, Dépôt des Fortifications des Colonies, Am. Sept., no. d'ordre 218, Bigot, "Relation du siege de Louisbourg," 15 Aug., 1745.

⁴⁵ ANON., *Mémoire pour Messire François Bigot...*, I, p. 8.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

situation changed drastically with the intervention of an outside force six months after the outbreak of revolt.

When the New Englanders landed to lay siege to Louisbourg 11 May, 1745, Duchambon assembled the garrison and urged the troops to forget the past and unite with the officers and townspeople in facing the enemy. The men demurred at first and asked for a guarantee that no one would be punished for taking part in the mutiny. Naturally the governor consented and, together with Bigot, solemnly promised a complete pardon in the name of the king.⁴⁷ In the subsequent fifty-day siege the troops according to all reports acquitted themselves well.⁴⁸ At no time had they ever questioned or attempted to evade what they considered to be their duty as soldiers. Still, when they were called upon to repair the fortifications that were damaged by cannon fire, they would only work for double the normal labourer's wage and with immediate payment in cash.⁴⁹ Perhaps twenty or thirty soldiers were killed before the town surrendered at the end of June,⁵⁰ and among the first casualties was Laurent Soly, one of the principal Swiss instigators of the mutiny.

After the surrender of Louisbourg the garrison was evacuated and most of its members arrived at the French port of Rochefort in August, 1745. The French companies were later sent back to Isle Royale in 1749 when the colony returned to French rule, but a great many, perhaps the majority, of the men who had experienced the mutiny and siege died or deserted before the garrison was re-established.⁵¹ No detachment from the Karrer regiment ever went back to Isle Royale as Duchambon and Bigot convinced Maurepas, the Minister of Marine, that it was the Swiss who had not only initiated the mutiny but also led the French soldiers in the days that followed the first outbreak.⁵²

III

Although aware that the garrison had fought well, Maurepas felt that news of the soldiers' discontent had determined the English to attack Louisbourg and he tended to blame the mutiny for the fall of the fortress.⁵³ Perhaps a certain desire to identify a scapegoat for the loss of Isle

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 9.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*; AC, C11C, Duchambon to Minister, 23 Sept., 1745. Two Swiss deserted and one French soldier was executed for treason during the siege but this is not a sign of excessive disaffection by eighteenth century standards.

⁴⁹ AC, F3, Vol. 50, fol. 378v, BIGOT, "Sur la prise de Louisbourg", Aug., 1745.

⁵⁰ One list of casualties reported a total of 50 deaths on the French side but this includes civilians as well as soldiers. AC, F3, Vol. 50, fol. 407, n.d., n.s.

⁵¹ AC, D2C, Vol. 48, "Liste des Soldats des Troupes servant ci devant a l'Isle Royale désertés à Rochefort," [n.d.], [n.s.]; AC, B, Vol. 84-2, fol. 289, Maurepas to de Serigny, 10 Feb., 1746.

⁵² Duchambon's and Bigot's letter; AC, B, Vol. 82-2, fol. 377, Maurepas to Karrer, 14 Sept., 1745.

⁵³ AC, B, Vol. 82-2, fol. 369, Maurepas to de Barrailh, 20 Aug., 1745; *ibid.*, fol. 377, Maurepas to Karrer, 14 Sept., 1745. In fact, news of the mutiny could not have reached New England in time to affect the plan to attack Louisbourg. Reports in the summer and fall of 1744 of low morale in the garrison however did encourage the New Englanders to attempt the invasion. RAWLYK, *op. cit.*, pp. 27-57.

Royale accounts for the minister's insistence on the need for severe punishment to restore discipline among the colonial troops. In August, 1745, he instructed de Barrailh, the governor of Rochefort, to make discreet inquiries on the subject of the Louisbourg mutiny and to arrest those identified as ring-leaders by the colonial commander and *ordonnateur*. When court-martials were organized late in the fall, Maurepas ordered them to look into the soldiers' complaints against their officers.⁵⁴ There was no excuse for rebellion but Maurepas, who was well aware that irregularities had long been common in the Isle Royale garrison, intended to take some disciplinary action against those officers whose unfair treatment of the men had been particularly flagrant. The records give no indication that any officer was ever actually punished.

In view of the special status of the Karrer regiment, the Swiss mutineers could only be tried by court-martials composed of their own officers. These were held in the second half of November, 1745. A number of those accused were released but five men were convicted and sentenced to death.⁵⁵ Of these, one died in prison and another, Abraham Dupâquier, escaped. François Bigot was furious when he learned that the *premier chef* of the rebels had escaped the noose. *Si celui de qui dependoit sa sûreté eut été pendant six mois à la discrétion de ce misérable, comme je l'ay été,* he wrote, *il seroit encore en prison.*⁵⁶ Maurepas was also displeased, all the more so as there were hints that Colonel Karrer and his officers may have intentionally provided the Lieutenant-Colonel's son with an opportunity to flee.⁵⁷ Some of Dupâquier's comrades were not so fortunate. Joseph Renard and Corporal du Croix were hanged on 7 December and their bodies were left on the gallows at Rochefort all day, *afin de servir d'exemple a un chacun.*⁵⁸ Two days later, Christophe Jout was decapitated hours after appearing before the court-martial where he expressed the hope that he too would be an example to others.

...il savoit bien qu'il alloit perdre la Vie... mais que son Exemple devoit apprendre aux off^s command^t. pour le Roy de tenir la main a ce que le soldat ne fut point Vexé et que Luy fut distribué bons conformem^t a l'intention de sa majesté les Vivres payés sur leur solde...⁵⁹

The court-martials of the French mutineers were delayed for a time when the accused brought up the pardon they had been promised by Duchambon and Bigot. Maurepas quickly intervened however, declaring that the king could not be bound by the promise since he had had no knowledge of it and insisting that examples be made of some of the men

⁵⁴ AC, B, Vol. 82-2, fol. 403, Maurepas to de Barrailh, 23 Nov., 1745.

⁵⁵ AC, C11C, Vol. 9, fols. 118-21, Bigot to Maurepas, 11 Dec., 1745.

⁵⁶ *Collection de Manuscrits contenant lettres, mémoires, et autres documents historiques relatifs à la Nouvelle-France* vol. III (Québec: 1884), p. 271 (Bigot to Minister, 2 Dec., 1745.).

⁵⁷ AC, B, Vol. 82-2, fol. 412, Maurepas to Karrer, 10 Dec., 1745; *ibid.*, fol. 415, Minister to de Barrailh, 15 Dec., 1745.

⁵⁸ Du Croix court-martial.

⁵⁹ Jout court-martial.

of the *troupes de la marine*. We have no accounts of the French court-martials but other records indicate that at least eight men were condemned. Five of these were hanged in January, 1746, one died in prison and two were sentenced to life terms as galley slaves.⁶⁰ In all, eight men were executed as a result of the Louisbourg mutiny, making it a more severely punished event than any of the revolts André Corvisier mentions in his study of the French army from 1700 to 1763.⁶¹

Because of the limitations of the historical sources, our knowledge of the mutiny is far from complete. Still, it seems sufficient to support a few conclusions about the basic nature of the event which should be reviewed as a preliminary to an analysis of the mutiny's origins. Occurring at a time when the state of war provided the soldiers with a favourable opportunity for successful action and touched off by an issue of spoiled vegetables, the revolt was essentially an armed assembly of protest intended to achieve some limited objectives. Almost all the men in the garrison were involved and they demanded material compensation for certain specific grievances. They did not attempt to depose their superiors but rather frightened them into complying with their wishes. If the mutineers' behaviour was restrained considering the circumstances, it must not be supposed that they acted with cool detachment in the pursuit of rationally defined goals. In fact, they were extremely angry. Simply by disobeying and threatening the officers, they committed an offense punishable by death. They would not likely have done so if their resentment was not deeply rooted and if they did not have more at stake than a few *livres*. Some of the rebels' spleen was vented against the merchants of the town and against François Bigot but the primary target of their ire was the officers. Whereas actions against Louisbourg's civilians were sporadic and relatively mild, only the officers had to face the assembled muskets and staunch hostility of their men.

IV

In attempting to explain the Louisbourg mutiny, historians have tended to emphasize two causal factors, the officers' exploitation of the men and the soldiers' miserable living conditions.⁶² The mutineers certainly felt they had been cheated by their officers but nowhere in the documents concerned with the mutiny is there any hint (beyond the reference to a demand for more firewood) that they revolted because they were "disgusted with their living conditions."⁶³ It is true that the material conditions of life were very hard for the men of the Louisbourg garrison but gener-

⁶⁰ AC, D²C, Vol. 53, "*Isle Royale. Rolle général des Troupes françaises commencé en 1739*," n.d., n.s.; Archives Maritimes, Port de Rochefort (hereafter cited as Port de Rochefort), IE, 141, Maurepas to Ricouart, 18 Jan., 1746.

⁶¹ André CORVISIER, *L'Armée Française de la fin du XVII^e siècle au ministère de Choiseul; le Soldat* (Paris: 1964), p. 883.

⁶² Guy FRÉGAULT, *François Bigot, Administrateur français* (Montréal: 1948), I p. 207; Rawlyk, *op. cit.*, pp. 71-72; Robert J. MORGAN and Terrence D. MACLEAN, "Social Structure and Life in Louisbourg," *Canada, an Historical Magazine*, I (June, 1974), p. 66.

⁶³ RAWLYK, *op. cit.*, p. 71.

ally they were no worse, and in many respects they were better, than those to which other eighteenth-century soldiers were subjected. A Louisbourg soldier did not always receive his rations in the prescribed amounts or qualities but he could easily supplement his diet by hunting and scrounging and never went hungry as his counterparts in France often did when they were in the field or in peacetime when sudden rises in food prices would occasionally make them unable to subsist on their fixed money allowance.⁶⁴ His annual issue of clothing was often defective and sometimes was not delivered for years in a row. Still, he was no worse off than soldiers in the French infantry and he could consider himself blessed in comparison to the men of the Albany garrison in 1700 who were, according to the governor of New York, in a "shameful and miserable condition for the want of cloaths that the like was never seen in so much that those parts of 'em which modesty forbids me to name, are expos'd to view."⁶⁵ He was not given an adequate supply of firewood and, although this did not make him unique among soldiers of the period, he may have suffered more from it than men who served in France because of the severe climate of Isle Royale. As for the "squalid and oppressive barrack conditions" that supposedly "led to the mutiny,"⁶⁶ the Louisbourg barracks were certainly not luxurious accommodation but they were probably more comfortable than the stuffy and disease-ridden barracks at Aix and less crowded than those in Marseilles where 30 or 40 men lived in a room with seven beds, "comme du bétail dans une écurie."⁶⁷ In fact, the soldiers' rooms were repaired and the bedding improved in the early 1740s so that they would likely have been more comfortable in 1744 than they had been in earlier periods.⁶⁸ In general, the notion that the men of the Louisbourg garrison were particularly wretched by contemporary standards is difficult to accept in view of their exceptionally low mortality rates.

Misery and hardship were the common characteristics of all soldiers in the eighteenth century, and of a great many civilians as well. Their presence alone accounts for neither the turbulence of the Louisbourg soldiers nor the loyalty of other, more wretched troops. Neither does it help to explain the timing of the mutiny which occurred when the men of the colonial garrison were, in some respects, better off than they had ever been in the past. The revolt should therefore not be dismissed simply as an *émeute de misère*; instead, it should be understood as the reaction of a group of men with a certain set of material interests and attitudes faced with a particular combination of circumstances. The main motive for the soldiers' uprising was the economic exploitation to which their officers

⁶⁴ CORVISIER, *op. cit.*, pp. 834-36.

⁶⁵ Quoted in W.J. ECCLES, "The Social, Economic, and Political Significance of the Military Establishment in New France," *Canadian Historical Review*, LII (March, 1971), p. 6.

⁶⁶ MORGAN and MACLEAN, *loc. cit.*, Cf., Frégault, *loc. cit.*

⁶⁷ Quoted in Albert BABEAU, *La Vie militaire sous l'Ancien Régime*. Vol. I, *Les Soldats* (Paris: 1889), pp. 85-88.

⁶⁸ For example, new sheets and mattresses replaced the vermin-infested straw in the barracks rooms in 1740. AC, C11B, Vol. 22, fols. 40-40v, de Bourville and Bigot to Minister, 20 Oct., 1740.

subjected them. Variations in the intensity of this exploitation along with the mens' evaluation of the prospects for successful violent action help to explain the timing of the event.

V

More important however are the "structural causes" of the mutiny. These are the enduring characteristics of the soldier's position in the Louisbourg garrison which generally encouraged the formation of group habits of thought and action among the soldiers and kept them at odds with the officers. Obviously, the first pre-condition of concerted group action is the existence of a group with some common interest and awareness of itself. The structure of military life in Louisbourg from about 1720 to 1744 formed such a group of the soldiers and enabled them to react collectively to the situation that arose in 1744. Besides the positive factors promoting unity among the men, there were negative factors which intensified solidarity through common hostility to the officers. The colony's system of recruitment emphasized the division between soldiers and officers and was one of the most important of these negative factors.

Of course, officers and soldiers occupied very different positions in the social hierarchy of the eighteenth century. In the Isle Royale garrison, however, the gulf between the two groups was exaggerated, partly because of the very different backgrounds of their members. The officers of the *troupes de la marine* had very strong roots in the Louisbourg community. Most of those serving in 1744 had been born in the colony or had come from elsewhere in North America at an early age. They had extensive ties of kinship and marriage with their fellow-officers and with the Louisbourg merchants who were often their business partners as well. Their men, on the other hand, were almost all born in France and came to Isle Royale as isolated individuals. Parish and judicial records provide the places of birth in France of 67 men of the French companies between 1720 and 1745. Of these, 31 (46 percent) were born in towns and cities (12 in Paris alone), a disproportionate urban representation in a country where about 5/6 of the population was born in the country.⁶⁹ The backgrounds of members of the Karrer detachment were extremely diverse but they did not distinguish officers from soldiers in any clear way. However, the impersonal recruitment practices of both the French and Swiss elements of the Isle Royale garrison reinforced the alienation of soldiers and officers.

In the regular army, each captain was responsible for recruiting men to fill the vacancies in his company. Ideally he solicited recruits from the same region year after year and would have some knowledge of the populace and they of him.⁷⁰ In many cases, the family estate provided a cap-

⁶⁹ This sample is too small to be statistically valid, but it does suggest that the proportion of urban recruits was much greater in the *troupes de la marine* than in the regular French army where about 30% of the men were born in towns. CORVISIER, *op. cit.*, pp. 390, 394.

⁷⁰ DE GUIGNARD, *L'École de Mars* tome I (Paris: 1725), p. 682; CORVISIER, *op. cit.*, pp. 163-78.

tain with a steady supply of replacements and this "feudal recruitment" was, according to the most eminent historian of the French army, an important factor promoting cohesion in many companies where the officers and some of the men would be linked in a paternalistic relationship that often predated their entry into the military.⁷¹ In actual practice however, much of the manpower needs of the eighteenth-century army were supplied by professional recruiters whose only interest was in collecting the cash payment they earned for each body they delivered and whose unscrupulous methods for extracting signatures from young men earned them the pejorative title of "*racoleurs*." The impersonal practice of "*racolage*" divorced the act of recruitment from the responsibilities of command. While it was not uncommon in the regular army, it was all but universal in the colonial *troupes de la marine* and in the Karrer regiment.⁷²

The men who eventually came to Louisbourg then, did not enlist in a particular company under a particular officer. In fact, few of them could have been certain when they signed their names that they would be sent to Isle Royale and not another colony. Until the 1720s, recruits for all the French colonies were gathered together at the Ile d'Oleron near Rochefort, and then embarked on ships bound for Canada, Isle Royale or the Caribbean with no regard for the wishes of the men involved.⁷³ In later years, a certain number of troops were raised each year specifically for the Isle Royale garrison but there was always a certain amount of shuffling and mixing of recruits at Rochefort so that a man destined for service in one colony could easily end up in another.⁷⁴

In the *troupes de la marine*, recruitment was not only impersonal, it was also frequently involuntary. A few recruits sent to Louisbourg were victims of "*lettres de cachet*";⁷⁵ others were taken straight from the pris-

⁷¹ CORVISIER, *op. cit.*, pp. 355-56.

⁷² On "*racolage*", see, *ibid.*, pp. 179-95; Georges GIRARD, *Racolage et Milice; Le service militaire en France à la fin du règne de Louis XIV* (Paris: 1922), pp. 75-161. Occasionally officers from the Isle Royale *troupes de la marine* on leave in France would raise some recruits for the colonies, but they did so to fill vacancies not in their companies but in their purses. There was an exception in 1730 when two companies were added to the garrison. The newly-appointed captains, de Gannes and Dailleboust, were sent to France to recruit some of the men they would later lead. These officers were born in Acadia and Canada respectively and it is unlikely that they engaged in the traditional sort of recruitment that required a certain degree of mutual confidence. Still, they at least had some long-term interest in the men they enlisted. AC, B, Vol. 54-2, fol. 520, "*Ordre du Roy au sr. de Gannes pour levée de Soldats*," 7 Mar., 1730. The recruitment of Swiss soldiers for service at Isle Royale was also impersonal. Karrer officers enlisted men for the regiment as a whole and not for particular companies. The officers stationed at Louisbourg had no recruitment responsibilities as long as they stayed in the colony. AC, F2C, Art, 3, fols. 323-26v, *Décisions de la Marine*, 29 June, 1722.

⁷³ See, for example, Port de Rochefort, IE, Vol. 86, fols. 241-46, Pontchartrain, 27 Feb., 1715.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, Vol. 116, fol. 404, Maurepas, 10 June, 1732.

⁷⁵ These were special orders of the king that, in these specific cases, were granted at the request of parents who wished to have troublesome sons exiled. See, for example, AC, C¹¹B, Vol. 8, fols. 55-64v, St. Ovide to Minister, 20 Nov., 1726.

ons of La Rochelle,⁷⁶ and of these a substantial number were army deserters whose lives were spared on condition that they serve in the colonies.⁷⁷ A great many ostensibly voluntary enlistments were doubtless the result of the tricks and pressure tactics of "*racoleurs*." It would be a mistake, however, to conclude that such *soldats malgré eux* were ever a majority in the Isle Royale garrison. Some men joined the colonial troops to escape from legal or other difficulties in France.⁷⁸ Most probably enlisted out of a desire for adventure, a need for security and an assured subsistence or a sincere military vocation. They would likely have received a more substantial enlistment bounty from an infantry regiment, but they ended up in the *troupes de la marine* because, in many cases, their health, size or age would have made them unacceptable to any other branch of the French armed forces.⁷⁹ The number of soldiers appearing in the Isle Royale records who were under the official minimum height of 5 *pieds 1 pouce* or below the minimum age of 18 years, is proof of the laxity of recruitment standards in the colonial troops.⁸⁰

Obviously, recruitment standards were not effectively enforced simply because sufficient numbers of volunteers could not be found otherwise. The colonial forces did not enjoy a good reputation in France and it was not so much because of their niggardly recruitment bounties or because service overseas was considered particularly hard. Men hesitated to join the *troupes de la marine* because they did not expect ever to return home once they had left Europe.⁸¹ This popular "prejudice," although exaggerated, was not without foundation. While men joining the regular French army or the Karrer regiment were committed to serving a limited term (usually six years), most recruits for the colonial *troupes de la marine* signed "*engagements perpétuels*" which effectively bound them to remain soldiers until the king saw fit to release them.⁸²

⁷⁶ Port de Rochefort, IE, Vol. 101, fols. 617, 621-22, de Morville, 31 May 1723.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, Vol. 87, fols. 645-51, Council, 28 May, 1716. Cf., Corvisier, *op. cit.*, p. 720.

⁷⁸ Thomas Beranger dit La Rosée, for example, injured a peasant in a drunken brawl. When criminal proceedings were initiated, he fled to Rochefort and immediately joined the *troupes de la marine*. AC, Outremer, G2, Vol. 182, fol. 215. "*Conseil Supérieure. Procédure criminelle... a l'encontre du nommé Nicolas LeBegue dt, Brulevillage et Thomas Beranger dt. La Rosée soldats accusés de vol*," 3 Mar.-2 June, 1733.

⁷⁹ Isle Royale recruiters generally received only 30 *livres* per man. This sum was supposed to cover their expenses (including enlistment bounties) and provide them with a profit. See, for example, Port de Rochefort, IE, Vol. 116, fols. 360-61, Maurepas, 20 May, 1732. Even if the entire amount were turned over to the recruits it would have compared unfavorably with the more substantial bounties offered by the recruiters who supplied the other branches of the French armed forces. CORVISIER, *op. cit.*, pp. 328-39.

⁸⁰ Of 21 men whose heights were recorded because they deserted or appeared in court between 1720 and 1745, four were under the minimum height. In the regular army, such short men were extremely rare. CORVISIER, *op. cit.*, pp. 640-41. Underage recruits were accepted even more readily, again in contrast with the more selective infantry. One governor remarked with satisfaction that the majority of the 40 soldiers arriving at Louisbourg in 1726 were 15 and 16 years old. AC, C¹¹B, Vol. 8, fols. 55-64v, St. Ovide to Minister, 20 Nov., 1726. Cf., Corvisier, *op. cit.*, tables between p. 476 and p. 477.

⁸¹ AC, C¹¹B, Vol. 33, fols. 89-91v, de Raymond to Minister, 12 Oct., 1753.

⁸² See, AC, B, Vol. 69, fol. 68, Maurepas to Duval, 22 Feb., 1739. The only systematic listing of terms of enlistment is a muster roll which dates from 1752. It indicates that, of 1067 men in the Isle Royale garrison at that time, only 59 (5.5%) had six-year "*engage-*

The sources do not allow any precise calculation of the duration of military service at Isle Royale. However, circumstantial evidence and the testimony of contemporaries make it clear that soldiers in the colony, *troupes de la marine* much more than Swiss, generally served for unusually long periods. Swiss and French had little hope of terminating their military careers except with an official discharge and the French *troupes de la marine* usually obtained one only after a great many years. In France and in the colonies, most men left the service through death, desertion or discharge and the following table shows the respective importance of each compared with similar statistics for a typical regiment of the French infantry.

SOLDIERS LEAVING THE ISLE ROYALE GARRISON, 1721-1742.⁸³

	<i>total</i>	<i>death</i>	<i>desertion</i>	<i>discharge</i>	<i>other</i>
IR troupes de la marine, 1721-42.	670	130	43	470	27
	100%	19%	6%	70%	4%
IR detachment, Karrer regt., 1723-24; 1730-42.	153	37	2	112*	2
	100%	24%	1%	73%	1%
Vivaraix-Infanterie regt., 1716-49.	3842	1374	1046	1290	132
	100%	36%	27%	34%	3%

*The officials at Louisbourg could not discharge men from the Karrer regiment but only record their return to France where presumably they were discharged.

These figures clearly demonstrate the preponderance of discharges as the end-point of soldiers' careers in the colonial garrison. This contrasts strongly with the situation which prevailed in the regular army where — paradoxically, in view of the predominance of limited periods of enlistment there — only one-third of the men left with discharges while roughly equal numbers died or deserted. The relative importance of discharges does not mean that the Isle Royale authorities were more generous in this regard than their counterparts in France; instead it is the result of comparatively low rates of death and desertion in the Isle Royale garrison.

Between 1730 and 1740 inclusive, the average annual rate of mortality among Isle Royale soldiers, French and Swiss, was slightly less than

ments limités" Archives du Séminaire de Québec, Papiers Surlaville, 55-8, "*Signallement general des troupes de l'Isle Royale*," [13 Mar., 1752]. The proportion may have been slightly higher before 1744.

⁸³ These figures were pieced together from a variety of sources. All of them, whether ration lists, reviews or isolated references in the governor's correspondence, were apparently based on the official headcounts prepared by a civilian bureaucrat and updated with information supplied by the major. The most consistent and useful source is the accounts of the keepers of the government storehouse. AC, C¹¹B, Vols. 11-25, *passim*., "*Etat de la recette et consommation des vivres faites dans les magasins du Roy à l'Isle Royale... subsistance des troupes...*". They are complete for the 1730-41 period and they show the number of men supplied with rations in each company and in the Swiss contingent along with the date at which the number changed because of a death, desertion, discharge or the arrival of a recruit. These statistics are not completely reliable. Desertion in particular may have been somewhat under-recorded, but data on the regular army were subject to similar distortions. Figures on the Vivaraix-Infanterie are from Corvisier, *op. cit.*, p. 585 (cf. pp. 583-88).

20 per thousand.⁸⁴ The annual average in the Vivarais-Infanterie regiment was over 80 per thousand during the same period (34 per thousand if war-time years are excluded).⁸⁵ The men of the colonial garrison were of course spared the rigours and dangers of campaigning, but they also lived in a healthy climate and seem to have suffered much less than the infantry soldiers from epidemics and food shortages. The statistics are also affected by the artificial selection process that resulted from the government's policy of discharging the sickly and the lame.

Desertion from the French army was quite common in the eighteenth century. Soldiers who were dissatisfied with the service, and those who were momentarily annoyed with an officer or in danger of being punished for a crime could generally escape and disappear into the surrounding population with only a minimum of planning and luck.⁸⁶ Deserters from the Isle Royale garrison, on the other hand, found themselves in a wilderness that was an extremely hostile environment for Europeans with a few settlements that were far too small for a fugitive to avoid detection. In most of the 45 recorded cases therefore, men, usually in groups of two or more, attempted to reach the Acadian settlements at Beaubassin, some 250 miles from Louisbourg in the British colony of Nova Scotia. The journey was difficult and perilous and the destination unattractive. It must be assumed that these deserters had extremely pressing motives for leaving the garrison — in fact, a few of them were seeking justice after committing a theft — or else an immoderate degree of determination of foolhardiness.⁸⁷ Of the 45, nineteen were apprehended and ten of these executed, a very high rate of capture by contemporary standards even if one assumes that only half the actual desertions were recorded. Moreover, the majority of the colony's desertions occurred at the outposts of Port Toulouse and Isle St. Jean which were much closer than Louisbourg to the mainland. Desertion, then, was hardly a practical option for Louisbourg soldiers who were unhappy with their lot.

The official policy on discharges was frequently repeated in the minister's despatches to Isle Royale governors:

*l'Intention de sa majeste est que les congez ne soient donnés qu'aux Invalides et a ceux qui voudront se faire habitans, Je vous recomande de ne point en congedier d'autres sans des ordres exprès.*⁸⁸

⁸⁴ Calculated on the basis of information derived from the ration accounts (see note 83).

⁸⁵ CORVISIER, *op. cit.*, pp. 684-85.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 700-03. Under similar conditions, groups of French and Swiss recruits destined for Isle Royale were often decimated by desertion before they left France. Port de Rochefort, IE, Vol. 103, fol. 319, Maurepas, 6 June, 1724; AC, B, Vol. 58, fols. 167v-68, Maurepas to de la Croix, 13 July, 1733.

⁸⁷ For an account of the difficulties encountered by one deserter who was eventually apprehended on the Nova Scotia mainland, see, AC, C¹¹B, Vol. 7, fols. 78-93, "Procédure criminelle extraordinaire instruite a l'Encontre du nommé michel Laugier d' alexandre accusé de desertion," 18 Oct., 1724.

⁸⁸ AC, B, Vol. 53, fols. 584-84v, Maurepas to St. Ovide and de Mézy, 22 May, 1729.

At least 24 men left the colony's *troupes de la marine* between 1721 and 1742 with "congés de grace" which their families had obtained by petitioning the minister and paying 150 *livres* to the Marine treasury.⁸⁹ A few other soldiers, Swiss and French, obtained discharges that were conditional on their remaining in the colony. The metropolitan authorities hoped to establish at Isle Royale a system which had contributed greatly to the development and population of Canada where soldiers had often been encouraged to marry and settle on the land with offers of discharges and material assistance.⁹⁰ Because of the inferior quality of Cape Breton soils however and because of the absence of established agricultural communities, the military settlement programme was a failure. As the colonial administrators were unwilling to lose good soldiers in what they considered a vain scheme, only a handful received discharges or permission to marry. The most important result of this for our purposes was that the Isle Royale soldiers were denied an exit route by which many men stationed in Canada were able to escape from a service that was not to their liking.

Most of the discharges at Isle Royale were given to men described as "disabled." When the documents occasionally give more details about individual cases, the most striking feature of the lists is the large number of soldiers who were sent home crippled from injuries received in accidents during the construction of the fortifications of Louisbourg.⁹¹ Another form of discharge, the *congé d'ancienneté*, though not mentioned in the minister's instructions cited above, was awarded to old soldiers who had served as long as forty years.⁹² Depending upon the number of recruits available and the vacancies created by deaths, desertions and discharges of other sorts in a given year, as many as ten or twelve of these veterans might be released or none at all. Men on six-year enlistments had priority but even they were not always sent home as soon as their terms had expired.⁹³ There is no way of determining the length of time that the majority who had unlimited enlistments served but it seems that in most cases it was considerable. Unless he were particularly lucky, a man in the *troupes de la marine* of Isle Royale could expect to serve for decades or until he was the victim of a crippling injury. Still, the Louisbourg official who referred to service of this sort as *un Espece d'esclavage* was exaggerating.⁹⁴ There were a number of escape hatches such as the *congés de grace*, the settler's discharges and perhaps a few ficti-

⁸⁹ For example, *ibid.*, Vol. 65, fol. 442v, Maurepas to St. Ovide and LeNormant, 26 Feb., 1737. The governor and *commissaire-ordonnateur* were not allowed to accept money payments directly from soldiers anxious to purchase their freedom. The minister reserved to himself the right to order discharges "*par des considerations particuliers.*" AC, B, Vol. 74, fol. 563v, Maurepas to Bigot, 6 June, 1742.

⁹⁰ AC, F₃, Vol. 50, fols. 161-62v, ordonnance, 26 June, 1725. Cf., Louise DECHÉNE, *Habitants et Marchands de Montreal au XVIIe siècle* (Paris and Montréal: 1974), pp. 80-88.

⁹¹ AC, D₂C, Vol. 47, passim. Many of these "invalids" would have been unable to earn a living but only a small minority could ever hope to draw a pension.

⁹² AC, C₁₁B, Vol. 7, fol. 19, St. Ovide to Minister, 16 Nov., 1724; *ibid.*, Vol. 20, fols. 317-17v, "troupe" (unsigned, undated mémoire), [1738].

⁹³ AC, B, Vol. 70, fols. 389-89v, Maurepas to de Forant, 7 May, 1740.

⁹⁴ AC, C₁₁B, Vol. 7, fols. 267-71, de Mézy to Minister, 7 Dec., 1725.

tious invalid's discharges.⁹⁵ However, these opportunities for departure were rare and unreliable. For most of the colony's French soldiers, the prospect of leaving the service must have appeared remote and uncertain in the extreme. The situation was temporarily worsened after 1743 when, because of the threat of war, the awarding of discharges was entirely suspended in both the *troupes de la marine* and the Karrer regiment.⁹⁶

It would certainly be a mistake however, to assume that every soldier wanted to escape the Isle Royale garrison. There is actually one case of a sickly young man who cried and begged his captain not to discharge him as an invalid.⁹⁷ The point is that, insofar as there was discontent and resentment in the garrison, it had few outlets. Contemporaries frequently remarked that the prevalence of unlimited terms of enlistment in the *troupes de la marine* was productive of low morale.⁹⁸ The prospects for promotion into the officer corps, which were nil, could not have improved matters.⁹⁹ Admittedly, six-year terms were the rule in the Karrer detachment which initiated the revolt. However, since all the Swiss in the colony were stationed at Louisbourg, desertion was even rarer among them than among the French. They were also less likely to benefit from settlers' discharges. If he were angry with his officers, homesick or dissatisfied with military life, the Isle Royale soldier, Swiss at least as much as French, was discouraged from responding in an individualistic fashion. More than a continental French soldier who could desert with little chance of being punished and more than a man attached to the Canadian troops who could exchange the military musket for the colonist's axe with relative ease, he had a permanent stake in his position as a soldier. Individual evasion of the military being more difficult at Isle Royale than elsewhere, collective action within the system was proportionately more likely.

Several characteristics of military life in Louisbourg operated in a more positive and direct way to encourage cooperative habits and a group spirit among the soldiers. To begin with, almost all of them were housed in one large barracks building. In the first half of the century, barracks

⁹⁵ For one example of a healthy man discharged as an invalid, see, AC, B, Vol. 53, fols. 583v-87, Maurepas to St. Ovide and de Mézy, 22 May, 1729.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, Vol. 76, fols. 50-50v, "Ordonnance du Roy qui suspend la delivrance des congés aux Soldats des Troupes des Colonies jusqu'au premier Janvier 1745," 20 Mar., 1743.

⁹⁷ "...étant toujours attaqué de l'escorbut son capitaine voulu le congédier, mais le Repondant qui pour lors n'avait qu'environ seize a dix sept ans se mit a pleurer, disant que s'il était congédié il ne scaurait que faire pour gagner sa vie..." This soldier adds that his reluctance to leave the island produced a great deal of consternation among his comrades. AC, C¹¹B, Vol. 17, fols. 296-315v, court-martial of Joseph Lagand dit Picard, charged with desertion, 24 Oct., 1736.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, Vol. 33, fols. 89-91v, de Raymond to Minister, 12 Oct., 1753.

⁹⁹ Only one man from the ranks, Jean Loppinot, received a commission in the colony's *troupes de la marine* before 1745. AC, D²C, Vol. 47, "Isle Royale — Officiers de guerre," 8 May, 1730. Loppinot was an exceptional case, having come with many of the original officers of the Isle Royale garrison from Acadia where his family was politically prominent. R. J. MORGAN, "A History of Block 16, Louisbourg; 1713-1768," (typed manuscript, Fortress of Louisbourg project, Louisbourg, 1975), p. 59.

were still a novelty and, in many French garrison towns and throughout Canada, troops were dispersed and billeted in the homes of civilians.¹⁰⁰ In Louisbourg, by contrast, every man was in close contact with his comrades and especially with the fifteen or twenty who shared his room and who together formed a group called a "chambrée." Besides sharing common living and sleeping quarters, the men of a *chambrée* ate together and cooked common meals in one large pot. They also tended to spend a great deal of their leisure time together and the barracks room was a favourite spot for drinking, conversation and lounging. Not only was the *chambrée* an important unit in a soldier's life — Renard, Soly and Dupâquier, the three principal instigators of the mutiny were apparently of the same room — but the barracks environment, where officers seldom entered, was well suited for the discussion of grievances and for conspiracies and plans for concerted action. The frequency of mutinies among naval forces has often been explained in terms of the solidarity bred by life in the fo'c's'le.¹⁰¹ Similarly, the Louisbourg revolt can be seen partly as a result of the barracks situation which helped to foster a sense of community and also provided an environment favourable to secret organized action. The accounts of the mutiny show that the leaders took good advantage of its potential.

Outside the barracks, the men of the Louisbourg garrison, like soldiers everywhere, were in constant contact with their fellows while engaged in such activities as guard-duty and drills. What makes them unique however is the fact that so many of them devoted very little time to these military pursuits as they worked six months of every year, building Louisbourg's fortifications. The construction of a European-style fortress in North America was an ambitious project and one which was never completed. Since civilian workers could not be persuaded to come to the colony, all the unskilled labour was performed by the troops of the garrison.¹⁰² Not all the soldiers were employed in this way. Many were not strong enough for the heavy work involved and a number were always required for duty in the outposts and guardrooms. In the 1720s when many of the massive excavations were completed, more than half of the colony's soldiers worked on the fortifications.¹⁰³ By the years around 1740, the proportion of working soldiers may have been somewhat smaller but most of the men must have had some experience as construction workers. Canada also has a labour shortage and many men in the *troupes de la marine* stationed there were allowed to take jobs in the community.

¹⁰⁰ CORVISIER, *op. cit.*, p. 94; W.J. ÉCCLES, *Frontenac, the Courtier Governor* (Toronto: 1968), p. 220.

¹⁰¹ T.H. WINTRINGHAM, *Mutiny; Being a Survey of Mutinies from Sparta-cus to Invergordon* (London: 1936), p. 256.

¹⁰² F.J. THORPE, "The Politics of French Public Construction in the Islands of the Gulf of St. Lawrence, 1695-1758" (unpubl. Ph. D. diss., University of Ottawa, 1973), pp. 232-62.

¹⁰³ In September, 1724, for example, when the strength of the colonial garrison was no more than 430, there were 236 soldiers (along with 17 civilians) employed in the construction of the fortifications. AC, C¹¹B, Vol. 7, fols.156-56v, de Verville, "*Etat des ouvriers...*" [Sept., 1724].

However, the soldiers from Canada were generally employed by private individuals, and so their work, like their system of lodging, had the effect of dispersing them.¹⁰⁴ Some Isle Royale soldiers also found employment with civilian parties but generally the voracious labour demands of state-financed construction at Louisbourg tended to concentrate them at one place under one employer.

If there were factors promoting a certain group feeling among Louisbourg's soldiers, there were nevertheless some divisions within the garrison that precluded the formation of a completely unified outlook. First of all, non-commissioned officers wielded considerable authority over the men in their daily affairs and received higher wages. The thirty members of the elite artillery company were also better paid than the other French soldiers. Because of their specialized duties, the cannoneers did not work on the fortifications and they were further set off from the others by their special barracks rooms and distinctive uniforms.¹⁰⁵ Most importantly, both the cannoneers and the French sergeants owed their special positions to the officers' appreciation of their superior merit (Corporals were chosen on the basis of seniority alone).¹⁰⁶ Not surprisingly, they stayed aloof from the mutiny.

The most significant complicating factor in the Louisbourg garrison however was the division between Swiss and French. The men of the Karrer regiment with its special privileges, traditions and procedures were separated from the others in many of the external formalities of military life, such as uniforms and drum signals, and also in some more essential matters, such as pay. Many of them were Protestants and most spoke German as a first language. The few glimpses of the soldiers' daily life afforded by judicial records give the impression that socializing between French and Swiss was not common. A Swiss or a French soldier would have had more extensive dealings with others of his own group, and especially those who were in his company and *chambre*. In the 22 years the Karrer regiment was represented in the garrison however, its members would have had considerable contact with the men of the *troupes de la marine* as they worked together on the fortifications, served together in mixed guard details and were housed in the same building and treated in the same hospital. There is even evidence of a high degree of mutual trust between individual French and Swiss in the two recorded desertions from the Karrer detachment. In both cases, a Swiss soldier fled with a group of French deserters.¹⁰⁷ Generally, the two major components of the Louisbourg garrison lived separately but enjoyed harmonious relations. Certainly, there is no evidence of hostility of the sort that led to fist-fights and duels between the men of two infantry regiments that were stationed

¹⁰⁴ ECCLES, *Frontenac, the Courtier Governor*, pp. 215-18; C.J. RUSS, "Les Troupes de la Marine, 1683-1713" (unpubl. M.A. thesis, McGill, 1971), pp. 95-98.

¹⁰⁵ AC, C11B, Vol. 26, fols. 236-38, ordonnance, 20 June, 1743.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, Vol. 21, fol. 55v, de Forant to Minister, 2 Oct., 1739.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, Vol. 18, fols. 85-87, LeNormant to Minister, 6 July, 1736; *ibid.*, Vol. 23, fols. 60-64, Duquesnel to Minister, 19 Oct., 1741.

at Louisbourg in the 1750s. In the early stages of the mutiny, the French and the Swiss acted independently but their differing tactics were aimed at achieving essentially, though not exactly, identical objectives.

Although the men of the Louisbourg garrison did not form a completely cohesive group, they shared a common awareness of their distinct identity as soldiers that, along with the factors mentioned earlier, helps to explain the solidarity they manifested during the mutiny. The judicial records occasionally give indications of the importance they attached to the external signs of the warrior's profession. In one case, two men were convicted of breaking into a house and stealing a few items of little value. One of their prizes was a piece of ribbon which they had a tavern keeper's wife fashion into fifteen *cocardes* so that they and their comrades could wear these specifically military adornments in their hats.¹⁰⁸ Another incident resulted from a dispute between a butcher named Dupré and a Swiss soldier who wished to sell some partridges he had shot. At one point, the soldier threatened to hit his opponent with the butt of his musket but the butcher managed to wrestle the weapon away from him. Hurling insults behind him, the vanquished soldier retreated towards the barracks but returned later, accompanied by two Swiss armed with sticks and demanded the return of his gun. When Dupré refused, the three attacked him, calling him *bougre* and shouting, *Tu desarme un soldat*. They beat him savagely, stabbed him in the chest and finally left him in the street, unconscious and gravely wounded.¹⁰⁹ The accounts of the victim and other witnesses give no hint that any national or religious animosity was involved in this incident. Instead, the brutal actions of the Swiss can best be interpreted as revenge against what they considered to be a serious offence on the part of a civilian who deprived a soldier of his weapon, the distinguishing mark of the military estate.¹¹⁰ Similarly, anger over the treatment of the volunteers who participated in the Canso expedition — anger which helped produce the outbreak in December, 1744 — should be seen as a product of the traditional notion that a victorious warrior ought to receive a share of the fruits of conquest.

Behind the actions of the mutineers seems to be the general belief that a soldier is an armed man who receives the king's money and his bread, as well as plunder on appropriate occasions, in order to fight his master's enemies and protect his possessions. When the men were given bad rations without what they considered legitimate reason, they felt not only deprived but insulted. Being made to work at unsoldierlike tasks without remuneration was also galling. The cannoners received high wages for their special duties and skills, but the other soldiers felt they were entitled to their subsistence pay by virtue of performing strictly

¹⁰⁸ AC, Outremer, G2, Vol. 182, fols. 148-357, "*Conseil Superieur Procedure criminelle... a l'encontre du nommé Nicolas LeBegue dit Brulevillage, et Thomas Berranger dit La Rosée soldats accusés de vol.*" 3 Mar.-2 June, 1733.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, Vol. 179, fols. 462-502, "*Conseil Superieur-Procedure Criminelle a l'Encontre de Reintender Sergent Suisse et deux autres Complices accuses de vol. [sic]*," 11 Sept. -20 Oct., 1727.

¹¹⁰ BABEAU, *op. cit.*, I, p. 240.

military service such as guard-duty.¹¹¹ Work in itself was not unacceptable as long as it was considered quite independent of a man's duties and status as a soldier and was paid for as such. What incensed the mutineers was having their officers treat them as mere labourers rather than as men-at-arms who occasionally worked for extra money. At his court-martial, Joseph Renard was asked if he had any complaints against his officers. He replied,

*qu'il avoit grievemt. lieu de se plaindre des Torts a luy arrivés par la mauvaise qualité des Vivres qui faisoient partie de sa solde ainsy que de tous les ouvrages qu'on l'avoit forcé de faire a la descente de la garde et cela sans salaire quoique ces ouvrages Etoient Indépendans de son Service et de son devoir...*¹¹²

The authorities shared the soldiers' attitude to a large degree and they never questioned the proposition that men who worked on the fortifications should be given a supplement to their normal wages. The way in which this extra pay was remitted however was not always to the soldier-workers' satisfaction and the economic history of Louisbourg's military labour force sheds a great deal of light on the origins of the soldiers' hostility towards their officers which characterized the mutiny.

The construction of Louisbourg's fortifications was not administered directly by the crown but rather farmed out to a private contractor who was responsible, among other things, for paying the soldier-workers. The state nevertheless took an active role in the project, partly through the chief engineer, a military officer independent of the colony's military command, who superintended the works and was in charge of the discipline of the work force. The engineer and the contractor usually cooperated closely but the governor also had some authority over the works and he and the other staff and company officers also exercised authority over the men.¹¹³ Thus the administration was complicated and, in the 1720s when the soldier-workers still received their wages directly from the contractor, they were often able to take advantage of the fact that the engineer together with the contractor was often at odds with the governor and the officers, and neither party was able to claim their undivided obedience.

Although theoretically free agents in the labour market, physically fit soldiers who were not required for duty in the outposts and guard-rooms were often obliged to work. One of their primary tasks was excavating and moving earth for the massive ramparts and ditches and they worked as day labourers or, more frequently, on a piece-work basis in gangs led by a "*chef d'atelier*" who was himself presumably a soldier.¹¹⁴ The workers were allowed to negotiate pay scales collectively with the contrac-

¹¹¹ This attitude was also manifested, for example, among the French dragoons who, in the time of Louis XIV, refused to help collect taxes. "*Nous nous sommes engagés pour dragons, et non pour sergents et porteurs de contraintes.*" *Ibid.*, I, p. 235.

¹¹² Renard court-martial.

¹¹³ THORPE, *op. cit.*, p. 251.

¹¹⁴ The sources shed little light on the organization and function of these gangs and only mention the "*chefs d'ateliers*" occasionally and incidentally. AC, B, Vol. 99, fols. 245-49, "*Instructions pour le S^r. franquet D^eur des fortifications de la N^{le}. france sur les ouvrages que le Roy veut être executées à l'isle Royale,*" 12 May, 1754.

tors and, in the early years, they occasionally staged demonstrations and refused to work in order to force their employer to raise the rates.¹¹⁵ The governor could intervene in case of deadlock. He was not directly interested in keeping down construction costs but was more concerned about morale and about the difficulties of keeping the soldiers at the fortifications at a time when a boom in private construction provided them with an alternative source of employment. Therefore, he often settled disputes in favour of the men.¹¹⁶ As the only substantial work force in the 1720s when public works in the colony were particularly extensive, the soldiers were in a relatively strong position and one that was in some ways strengthened by their military status, which meant that their subsistence was secure and their physical welfare the responsibility of the company captains. It is difficult to determine how much money the soldier-workers earned as a result but the minister of Marine concluded from the reports of "strikes" and "émeutes" that they were becoming rich and consequently insubordinate.¹¹⁷ It was one thing to establish pay rates however, and another to collect the actual wages. Owing to delays in forwarding funds, the contractor frequently found himself unable to pay the men in cash and resorted to the expedients of distributing notes which could only be redeemed at a discount, or paying in goods, especially wine. When funds were available, the workers were paid every two weeks, after which, according to the authorities, the majority went straight to the taverns and did not reappear for several days.¹¹⁸

As a wage earner the soldier-worker, was well-placed, but as a consumer he was extremely vulnerable. Since soldiers were not allowed to buy from merchants on credit, the custom was established from the earliest years of the colony's existence of giving each captain a monopoly on sales to the men of his company.¹¹⁹ This commerce was considered a duty as well as a privilege as it consisted mainly of essential items such as shoes and stockings — the standard military issues of these articles were never sufficient — as well as tobacco, liquor and extra food.¹²⁰ The officers provided these "*fournitures*" at greatly inflated prices and, in order to collect their debts, simply had the 30 *sols* per month that remained of their men's military wages after deductions paid directly into their hands. This monopoly was not complete however, and in the 1720s the captains frequently complained of the contractor's practice of increasing

¹¹⁵ The engineer and contractor reported these "*contestations tumultueuses*" and "*émeutes*" without providing details. AC, C¹¹B, Vol. 5, fols. 235-37, de Verville to Council, 19 June, 1720; *ibid.*, Vol. 6, fols. 127-30, Isabeau to Council, 30 Nov., 1722.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, Vol. 7, fols. 142-50, de Verville, mémoire, [1724].

¹¹⁷ "...les travaux que l'on fait dans cette isle donnant l'occasion au soldat de gagner de l'argent l'aysance qu'elle leur [sic] procure le rend delicat et difficile." AC, B, Vol. 52-2v, fols. 574v-77, Maurepas to St. Ovide, 18 June, 1728. In 1719, the engineer estimated that a man could earn five *livres* per day and 465 *livres* in a season. AC, C¹¹B, Vol. 4, fols. 66-68, de Verville to Council, 24 Jan., 1719.

¹¹⁸ AC, C¹¹B, Vol. 5, fol. 136v, St. Ovide and de Mézy to Minister, 10 Nov., 1720.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, Vol. 1, fols. 73-76v, l'Hermitte to Council, 3 Nov., 1714; AC, B, Vol. 88-1, fols. 175-75v, Maurepas to Guillet, 15 Oct., 1748.

¹²⁰ AC, C¹¹B, Vol. 12, fol. 252, St. Ovide to Minister, 11 Nov., 1732.

his profits by advancing goods to the workers in lieu of wages.¹²¹ Furthermore, these officers claimed the soldier-workers consumed much more merchandise than their military pay would afford and, although they had to be given clothing to protect them from the winter, they quickly squandered any cash they received from the contractor in the summer and neglected to repay their officers.¹²² Thus, captains and contractors struggled for a greater share of the soldier-worker's earnings.

In the early years, the contractor had the advantage of being supported by the Marine ministry but the captains had the backing of the colonial governor. The officers scored their first victory in 1721 when they obtained permission for a sergeant to be present at paydays in order to compel workers in need of new clothing to purchase it on the spot.¹²³ The contractor successfully resisted these pretensions however, and in 1727 the French officers complained that their men were being paid mostly in merchandise and in advance. They asked that the wages soldiers earned working on the fortifications, like their military wages, be turned over from the contractor to the company captains who could deduct the value of each man's debts and pay him the balance in cash.¹²⁴ This was already the practice in the Swiss contingent but it was not until some time in the 1730-1735 period that the officers of the *troupes de la marine* gained such complete control over the fruits of their men's labour. How or why they defeated their opponent is not clear but it is certain that, from that time until 1744, the captains derived a substantial portion of their total incomes from the profits they made from their soldier-workers. They were not negligent in searching for ways to increase these.

The administration of the Isle Royale garrison was never very orderly before 1745 and there is no indication that the captains were obliged to keep close accounts or to report to anyone on how they disposed of the workers' wages with which they were entrusted. They soon began paying the men their cash balances only once a year at the end of the construction season, thereby all but eliminating the possibility that any of them could stay out of debt.¹²⁵ In view of the limited demand for shirts and shoes, they expanded their merchandising facilities, concentrating on an institution called the canteen. In the 1730s and forties, each captain operated a canteen where his men could drink wine and spirits on credit and at exorbitant prices. Complaints about the canteens and their effects on drunkenness and absenteeism multiplied around 1740 when there were even allegations that officers forced working soldiers to spend their earnings on drink.¹²⁶ When the newly-appointed governor Duquesnel arrived

¹²¹ *Ibid.*, Vol. 5, fols. 386-88v, St. Ovide to Minister, 30 Nov., 1721.

¹²² *Ibid.*, Vol. 4, fols. 285-85v, Petition of de Rouville to the Comte de Toulouse, 1719.

¹²³ AC, B, Vol. 44-2, fol. 569v, Council to St. Ovide, 1 July, 1721.

¹²⁴ AC, C¹B, Vol. 9, fols. 72-78v, St. Ovide to Minister, 21 Nov., 1727.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, Vol. 23, fols. 88-90v, Bigot to Minister, 15 Oct., 1741; *ibid.*, Vol. 29, fols. 306-15, Franquet to Minister, 13 Oct., 1750.

¹²⁶ See, for example, AC, B, Vol. 68, fols. 347-48v, Maurepas to de Forant and Bigot, 26 May, 1739.

in the colony, he reported that the soldier-workers generally received no money whatsoever and he identified the situation as *un viel mal*.

*Il faut attaquer les fournitures qu'on fait aux soldats et les Cantines, qui font que quelque travail que fasse un travailleur, il ne voit jamais un sol on luy fait tout Consommer, de la livrongnerie et le degout pour le travail, auquel ils ne vont que forcés.*¹²⁷

In the late 1730s and early 1740s, the minister of Marine in France manifested a concern over abuses in the Louisbourg garrison that indicates he thought matters were more serious there than in Canada where the officers' routine appropriation of the military pay of working soldiers had been tolerated for years.¹²⁸ He had received reports about the confiscation of soldier-workers' pay and about other forms of exploitation, such as the captains' practice of taking the uniforms from the bodies of dead soldiers and "selling" them to new recruits.¹²⁹ Two new governors were appointed from outside the colony, de Forant in 1739 and Duquesnel in 1740, and instructed to remedy the situation. The officers were threatened with exemplary punishment unless they began treating their men more fairly and Maurepas actually went so far as to suspend the awarding of the *Croix de St. Louis* in the garrison in 1742.¹³⁰ Neither the minister nor the governors however could effectively oppose the firmly entrenched interests of the officers. The latter convinced them that their salaries were not sufficient to support a family in a difficult and expensive colony like Isle Royale. Consequently, no fundamental change was made in the system of exploitation which left a captain free to dispose of his men and their earnings as he saw fit.¹³¹ Still, the governors exercised some restraining influence over the officers. However, when Duquesnel died in October 1744 and the command was assumed by Duchambon, a veteran of the Isle Royale officer corps, there is reason to suspect that the inhibitions that limited officers' profiteering at the soldiers' expense were abandoned.

The gap in outlook, background and material interests between the Louisbourg soldiers and their officers was considerable. The impersonal recruiting practices of the Karrer regiment and the *troupes de la marine* were not of a sort to reinforce the soldier's deferential attitude to his superiors nor his attachment to his company commander. Neither did the divided loyalties that accompanied the soldiers' employment under the

¹²⁷ AC, C¹¹B, Vol. 22, fol. 93v, Duquesnel to Minister, 1 Dec., 1740.

¹²⁸ Russ, *op. cit.*, pp. 181-83. In Canada, even this relatively mild form of exploitation aroused the indignation and opposition of the bishop and clergy. If Canadian officers were more restrained in this regard than were their Isle Royale counterparts, the difference can be explained partly in terms of the more complex public elite of the St. Lawrence colony which was not so completely dominated by the military. However, the greater ease with which Canadian soldiers could leave the service, and the officers' consequent concern about morale, may have been more important.

¹²⁹ AC, B, Vol. 68, fols. 347-48v. Maurepas to de Forant and Bigot, 26 May, 1739.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*, Vol. 74, fols. 592-92v, Maurepas to Duquesnel, 15 June, 1742.

¹³¹ Although Duquesnel claimed that he abolished the canteens in 1741 (AC, C¹¹B, Vol. 23, fols. 24-29, Duquesnel and Bigot to Minister, 20 Oct., 1741), subsequent correspondence shows that he did no more than limit their operation *Ibid.*, Vol. 24, fols. 52-52v, Duquesnel to Minister, 7 Oct., 1742.

fortifications contractor enhance the officers' authority. More important though was the unexampled economic tyranny which the officers, as paymasters, creditors and monopoly retailers, exercised over their men. As they gained exclusive control over the soldiers' earnings, they used their power for increasingly blatant exploitation which probably had a severe effect on their men's material prosperity. Whether it impoverished them or not however, it certainly appeared unjust to its victims and, more than anything else, it accounts for the discontent that eventually led to violence.

The company officers at Isle Royale showed more concern for their own profits than for their men's morale but they had little incentive to do otherwise. In the regular French army, by contrast, captains who wished to minimize the considerable trouble and expense of recruitment had a selfish interest in preventing desertion and encouraging re-enlistment by keeping their men as contented as possible.¹³² Colonial officers of the Karrer regiment as well as the *troupes de la marine*, on the other hand, had no regular recruitment responsibilities and those resident at Louisbourg were in relatively little danger of losing men through desertion and military settlement programmes, regardless of the level of morale.

As it was so difficult for soldiers, especially those who served in the *troupes de la marine*, to leave the colonial garrison, Louisbourg was very much a "pressure-cooker." As the officers' exploitation became more intense, there was no real "safety valve" of desertion which otherwise might have rid the community of its most disaffected elements. Instead, the likelihood of a major explosion increased. This is not to say that the relationship between stimulus and response was mechanical in any literal sense. Rather, the objective circumstances of the soldier's position in Louisbourg were such that aggressive group action was a relatively feasible reaction to severe discontent. Individual evasion was not a practical alternative as it was for many of the French troops stationed in France and in Canada. Moreover, factors such as the systems of work and lodging gave the men experience that enabled them to think and act collectively.

Already, in the 1720s, the soldier-workers had been involved in confrontations resembling modern strikes. Their opponent however was generally the fortifications contractor. When the company captains gained control of their wages in the following decade, the men were much less bold in dealing with such powerful and prestigious adversaries who had at their disposal the military system of discipline and punishment. As a result, there were no reported "*emeutes*" from the late 1720s until 1744. In the end, the soldiers only overcame their fear and deference when the exploitation they suffered became particularly severe and when the state of war temporarily strengthened their hand.

Nevertheless, although these structural and short-term factors that produced both unity and discontent among the soldiers made a confronta-

¹³² BABEAU, *op. cit.*, I, pp. 176-80.

tion likely in 1744, they do not entirely account for the outbreak of mutiny by themselves. Soldiers in the eighteenth century simply were not accustomed to defying their officers. Like other contemporary groups from among the popular classes, they only opposed their superiors openly when they were convinced that their cause was a righteous one. The "justifying ideology" that sanctioned the revolt and determined the form it took can, to some extent, be inferred from the mutineers' words and actions. Certainly the men felt their actions were legitimate. They showed no desire to command in the place of their officers, but only to force the latter to rule in a proper fashion. Therefore the mutiny as an open revolt ended quickly and the men returned to nominal subordination as soon as assurances were given that their grievances would be redressed. Throughout the period that followed, the leaders drew up accounts and negotiated payments in an orderly fashion without ever challenging the authority of the *commissaire-ordonnateur*. The soldiers had only resorted to force after milder forms of protest were ignored. This type of action was, of course, extremely destructive of military subordination, but it was intended only as a temporary emergency measure that would compel the authorities to correct the situation in which wages and other benefits were unlawfully withheld. The men seemed quite confident that their aims were not a threat to the hierarchical system since they merely demanded that actual practice in the garrison be consistent with official policy.

What the soldiers sought in 1744 was "justice" and the word itself occurs frequently in the court-martials and other records of the mutiny. On the surface, the justice they demanded was in the form of monetary compensation for material losses to cheating officers. On another level, they were asking to be treated with the respect due to a soldier. A soldier, these men apparently felt, earned plunder and subsistence wages by fighting and guarding. He might agree to perform other, unrelated duties in return for pay but he should not be used as a beast of burden or as a milk-cow by those who exercised military authority over him. From the mutineers' point of view, it was the officers who had subverted the military system over the years, and the soldiers who were obliged to restore a proper balance. Their procedures, as they assembled behind the barracks to the beat of drums and under the supervision of corporals, were eminently soldier-like and consistent with their limited objectives.

VI

Was the mutiny a success? In the short-term, the men's limited objectives were apparently achieved. They were given compensation for unfair wage deductions — admittedly, the sources do not make it clear whether the soldiers were ever completely satisfied on this point — and the officers and government officials treated them with respect. Trusting the authorities' promises of amnesty however, they were defeated in the end. It is possible that matters might have ended differently had the garrison not had the bad luck to be conquered six months after the first uprising and sent to France where the soldiers' power relation with the officers was reversed. A few men might have been saved from the hangman in

this case and the officers might have been more restrained in their profiteering as long as their memory of the mutiny remained vivid, but the economic and power position of the soldiers would not have changed in any fundamental or enduring way. Since they had no intention of effecting any institutional or structural changes in the garrison, it is difficult to imagine their revolt resulting in anything more than a temporary modification of the existing order.

The mutiny was not without lasting results, however. The minister of Marine had attempted to reform the abuses in the Isle Royale garrison from as early as 1739 but, when the colony was re-established as a French possession in 1749, the recollection of the violence of 1744 must have added some urgency to his campaign to reform the military administration. As a result, the garrison was run in a much more regular fashion in the second period. There was still exploitation but it was controlled and systematized so that Captains were limited to profits of 25 percent on purchases made by their men.¹³³ Perhaps the soldiers found this parasitic system less annoying than the more blatant one that prevailed earlier. In any case, no further incidents of organized resistance at Louisbourg were recorded. However, most of the "structural causes" of the mutiny remained after 1749. The fundamental characteristics of military life in the colony were always of a sort that insurrection was possible, since they promoted solidarity among the soldiers and alienated them from the officers. Accordingly, in 1750 the engineer Franguet still observed among the soldier-workers "*un Esprit de Sedition et de revolte.*"¹³⁴

¹³³ AC, C¹¹B, Vol. 28, fols. 44v-46, Desherbiers and Prévost to Minister, 21 Oct., 1749.

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*, Vol. 29, fols. 313v-14, Franquet to Minister, 13 Oct., 1750.