

# The Bureau of the balance of trade and the production of foreign trade statistics in France during the 18<sup>th</sup> century

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Many authors have tried to write the history of the *Bureau de la balance du commerce* (Bureau of the balance of trade). Active from 1713 to the 1791, this French administrative unit produced nearly complete data on bilateral French trade during the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Yet, our knowledge of its actual practices is still very incomplete.<sup>3</sup> Past studies are outdated because they used only a limited number of primary sources, mainly coming from the F12 register of the Archives Nationales in Paris.<sup>4</sup> The problem is that this register covers almost exclusively the last period of the Bureau of the balance of trade (1781-1792). Hence, the previous period has been barely studied at all. One consequence is that the reasons put forward for the profound transformation in the early 1780s of the Bureau have missed the main point. Our knowledge of what Michel Béaud has named the « first Bureau » of the balance of trade, the one that existed up to the beginning of the 1780s, is very superficial, and mainly based on a

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<sup>3</sup> Léon Biollay, 1885, *Études économiques sur le XVIIIe siècle. Le Pacte de famine. L'Administration du Commerce*. Paris: Guillaumin ; Ruigero Romano, 1957, "Documenti e prime considerazioni intorno alla balance du commerce della Francia dal 1716 al 1780," dans *Studi in onore di Armando Saponi*. Milan: Instituto editoriale cisaopino, p. 1267-1299 ; M. Béaud, 1964, "Le Bureau de la Balance du Commerce, 1781-1791" *Revue d'histoire économique et sociale*, Vol 42, p. 357-377 ; Michel Morineau, 1965, "La Balance du commerce franco-néerlandais et le resserrement économique des Provinces-Unis au XVIIIe siècle" *Economisch Historisch Jaarboek*, Vol 30, p. 170-233. For a recent synthesis on these works, see: Guillaume Daudin, 2005, *Commerce et prospérité: la France au XVIIIe siècle*. Paris: PUPS, 610 p, chapter 4.

<sup>4</sup> Michel Morineau also used two additional set of documents from the municipal libraries of Rouen and Saint-Brieuc.

memorandum by Pierre Bruyard (head of the Bureau from 1756 to 1783) written in 1787 in circumstances we will discuss later.

Yet, other primary sources for the Bureau of the balance of trade exist. The richest one is the Bruyard collection in the Dutch Economic History Archives in Amsterdam: it includes part of the administrative and personal papers of Pierre Bruyard and his son<sup>5</sup>. The other source is made from documents that were long kept in the archives of the Statistique Générale de France. They were transferred to the Archives Nationales de Paris during the last decade and catalogued only very recently. They include a number of statistical data and memoranda on the economic administration of the Ancien Régime<sup>6</sup>. The third unused primary source comes from the Chambre de commerce de la Rochelle, where a folder devoted to the balance of trade lays<sup>7</sup>. Finally, we also used the archives of the physiocrate Pierre-Samuel Du Pont de Nemours which are in Delaware<sup>8</sup>. While it is probable that additional primary sources are still to be uncovered, as it is all these new materials add a lot to our knowledge of the composition of the Bureau and on its techniques for gathering and processing the data on French external trade.

Hence, the purpose of this paper is to use these documents both to present the history of the Bureau of the balance of trade and to explain how it collected and collated statistical data from 1713 to 1792. We believe these two stories must be presented simultaneously. On the one

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<sup>5</sup> Sandra Bos, Jan Lucassen, et Roger de Peuter, 1996, "Inventaire de la Collection Bruyard concernant le Bureau (de la Balance) du Commerce et l'Inspection des Manufactures sous l'Ancien Régime (1571-1831)" *Inventarisatie bijzondere collecties, NEHA Amsterdam* n° 6. This document can be consulted on the web site of the Internationaal Instituut voor Sociale Geschiedenis: <http://www.iisg.nl/archives/pdf/10729184.pdf>. Pierre Bruyard has directed the Bureau for several years (see *infra* for further details). His papers were bought by Posthumus in the 1930s.

<sup>6</sup> This includes three boxes: F<sup>12</sup> 13100-1-2. See Christiane Douyère-Demeulenaere, 2005, "Mémoires sur le commerce (XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle) F/12/13100 à 13102. Inventaire détaillé." 10. Centre Historique des Archives Nationales: Paris.

<sup>7</sup> "Correspondance passive de la Chambre de Commerce avec le Contrôle Général", A.D. de Charente Maritime, Fond Chambre de Commerce de La Rochelle, Carton XXVII La Rochelle. We thank Paul Cheney for drawing our attention to the existence of these archives and providing a copy to us.

<sup>8</sup> Hagley Museum and Library, Eleutherian Mills Historical Library (EMHL), Papers of Pierre Samuel Du Pont de Nemours (1739-1817) and his two wives. John Beverly Riggs inventoried this fund: John Beverly Riggs, 1970, *A guide to the Manuscripts in the Eleutherian Mills Historical Library*. Greenville (Delaware).

hand, the institutional history of the Bureau had major impacts on the way it collated data. On the other hand, endeavours to change and improve its statistical practices had an important role in the successive mutations of the Bureau.

The sources we consulted confirmed the chronology observed by past historians. There was a clear break between the first Bureau of the balance of trade, which was terminated in 1783 when its director, Pierre Bruyard, was dismissed, and the second Bureau, which was nominally terminated on September, 27<sup>th</sup> 1791 by a *décret* of the Assemblée Nationale. The Bureau actually continued working in 1792. It is only on October, 13<sup>th</sup> 1792 that it was replaced by the *Bureau des archives du commerce*<sup>9</sup>. M. Béaud, whose paper is still considered as the authority on the Bureau's history, presented the creation of the second Bureau as an answer to the routine of the methods and the mediocrity of the results of Bruyard's Bureau. He affirmed that the methods and data production of the second Bureau were very superior to what Bruyard did<sup>10</sup>. Actually, the transformation of the Bureau had little to do with the quality of Bruyard's work, which was quite satisfactory considering its very limited budget. The transformation was actually linked to a thorough reorganisation of the finance administration that Necker started and that his successors, hesitantly, continued.<sup>11</sup> Furthermore, the institutional transformation was much more noticeable than what M. Béaud, and, before him, L. Biollay believed. The second Bureau of the balance of trade had a much larger budget and much larger area of expertise than the first one. The objectives of the first Bureau were mainly the redaction of an annual statistical table including bilateral imports and exports by goods. The second Bureau had much larger responsibilities in economic expertise. While it was still in charge of the annual table, he also had to produce detailed reports on specific aspects of the

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<sup>9</sup> Béaud "Bureau de la Balance du Commerce...", p. 365.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., p. 358-9 et 367-371. However, the paper does not provide a lot of evidence justifying his judgement.

<sup>11</sup> Diverse aspects of this reorganization were studied in J.F. Boshier, 1970, *French Finances 1770-1795 : From Business to Bureaucracy*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, xiii, 370 p. See also Philippe Minard, 1998, *La Fortune du colbertisme : État et industrie dans la France des Lumières*. Paris: Fayard, 504 p.

French external trade (e. g. bilateral trade with England) and other economic topics such as the tax system.

## **1. The first Bureau of the balance of trade from its origins to 1779**

The French royal state had been interested in measuring the trade balance since the middle of the 17<sup>th</sup> century. Before Colbert came in office, this interest was thrown down by the lack of administrative coherence, including the fact that there was no custom union in France. In 1664, Colbert had the *Fermes Générales* (General farms) establish alphabetical reports of goods going out or coming in the kingdom. His successors did as well.<sup>12</sup> At the end of the 1690s, Hénault, a farmer general, was charged with establishing a complete list of exports and imports. Despite the wishes of successive *contrôleurs généraux des finances* (comptrollers general of finances), these attempts were not successful, notably because of jurisdictional conflicts between the comptroller general of finances, the General Farms and the Navy secretary of state. It is only during the preparation of the treaty of Utrecht, finally signed on April, 11<sup>th</sup> 1713, which was supposed to include a trade treaty with Great Britain, that the cost of the absence of knowledge on French external trade became obvious to French negotiators. While on the British side, diplomats and merchants representants could assess the likely consequences of the various concessions made and given, the French representants were unable to do the same.<sup>13</sup>

On April, 18<sup>th</sup> 1713, one of the two farmers general belonging to the Council of trade<sup>14</sup>, Charles Poyrel de Grandval (?-1747), was put in charge of establishing an annual French

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<sup>12</sup> Biollay, ..., p. 485-6 ; Thomas Schaeper, 1983, *The French Council of Commerce, 1700-1715. A study of Mercantilism after Colbert*. Columbus: Ohio State University Press, xvi, 305 p. The Archives Nationales own a number of « Estats » or lists of lists established by the General farms at the end of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, especially under the reference F<sup>12</sup> 1834A.

<sup>13</sup> Thomas Schaeper, 1983, *The French Council of Commerce, 1700-1715. A study of Mercantilism after Colbert*. Columbus: Ohio State University Press, xvi, 305 p.

<sup>14</sup> The French Board or council (from 1701 to 1722) of trade included both representants from the state administration (including the *Contrôleur général* and a number of intendants), from the General Farms and from private traders. It was supposed to insure that information from the traders was available to the state, that

balance of trade. As M. Béaud noticed, this first Bureau of the balance of trade was very stable: it had only three directors in seventy years. It is important to present their origins and their administrative careers.

### **1.1. The directors of the first Bureau of the balance of trade<sup>15</sup>.**

Grandval was in charge of the redaction of the trade balance from 1713 up to his death in 1747. Grandval's life is not well known. According to Daniel Dessert, who does not know his birthdate, he might have been the son of a *collecteur des tailles* (taille tax collector) but an earlier and reliable source, Arnould, affirms that he was a former secretary of embassy.<sup>16</sup> He is mentioned as a financier as early as 1673 and became farmer-general in 1687. He was given a commission on April, 18<sup>th</sup> 1713 to work at « une balance du commerce d'après les extraits des déclarations d'entrée et de sortie qui sont envoyés au Conseil »<sup>17</sup>. At the end of the 1730s, Grandval, who probably was already quite old when given his commission, became unable to accomplish this task because of the « infirmités que lui causent son grand âge ».<sup>18</sup> Hence, the comptroller general of finances, Orry, nominated through a commission on January 20<sup>th</sup> 1738, Jean-François La Borde (1691-1769), then *Député de commerce* (Deputy) of the town of Bayonne at the Board of trade, to assist Grandval in his task. The terms of the commission are remarkable: La Borde was not given any remuneration, but was to inherit Grandval's office at his death. Two years after, La Borde had become farmer

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decisions concerning trade and industry were taken with full information and that they could be transmitted to the private actors smoothly.

<sup>15</sup> Before 1783, the word "director" does not have any particular administrative meaning: it simply designates who is in charge of the Bureau of the balance of trade.

<sup>16</sup> Ambroise-Marie Arnould, 1791-1793, *De la balance du commerce et des relations commerciales extérieures de la France dans toutes les parties du globe particulièrement à la fin du règne de Louis XIV et au moment de la Révolution*. Paris: Buisson, p. 122. Daniel Dessert, 1984, *Argent, pouvoir et société au Grand Siècle*. Paris: Fayard, 824 p, p. 674. D. Dessert is wrong when he dates his death in 1716, trusting the fact that he withdrew from the General farms.

<sup>17</sup> "Arrêt du conseil qui ordonne qu'il sera payé 10 000 livres par l'adjudicataire des fermes générales sans aucune retenue du dixième aux employés à la balance du commerce du 29 février 1716", NEHA, Archives Bruyard, Item 65: Amsterdam

<sup>18</sup> "Copie de la Commission donnée par M. De Sechelles Controleur Général des finances le 5 avril 1756 pour la Direction de la Balance du Commerce", NEHA, Archives Bruyard, Item 39: Amsterdam.

general and did not want to continue in a job that earned him no money: he resigned from his commission. On November 7<sup>th</sup> 1740, the commission was given, with the same terms, to Baroz (?-1756), then first *commis* (book-keeper) of the director of trade and intendant of finances, Louis Fagon. Baroz worked for many years at establishing the trade balance without any remuneration until Grandval's death at the end of May or the beginning of June 1747. Baroz was then, as it had been decided, officially charge with the job through a commission in June 3<sup>rd</sup> 1747. He kept this position until his death on March 31<sup>st</sup> 1756.

His successor was Pierre Bruyard. Bruyard's commission is dated from April 5<sup>th</sup> 1756. It gave him the same conditions as his predecessor<sup>19</sup>. At this time, Bruyard had already been working for thirty years in the French administration of trade and manufactures. He was born in Lyon on October 31<sup>st</sup> 1707. He started working for Louis Fagon, intendant of finances and member of the Council of trade in charge of, among other things, the General farms, in 1724 when he was 16 or 17 year old<sup>20</sup>. When Fagon died on May 8<sup>th</sup> 1744, Bruyard started working for the new director of the Board of trade (or director of trade), the *conseiller d'État* and former intendant of commerce Rouillé de Jouy. When Rouillé quit to head the Navy departement in 1749, Bruyard changed employer again and started working for the new director of trade, the intendant of finances Trudaine. On that occasion, he was promoted to the rank of first book-keeper like Baroz<sup>21</sup>. When Trudaine died in 1769, Bruyard went to work for his son, Trudaine de Montigny, who succeeded to his father in his office. Bruyard finally retired (probably unwillingly) on May 7<sup>th</sup> 1783<sup>22</sup>.

The remuneration associated with the office of director of the balance of trade was also very stable. In 1713, Grandval received a compensation of 4,900 livres tournois. This sum

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<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> "Brevet de pension de retraite n°21032", NEHA, Archives Bruyard, Item 6: Amsterdam and "Département de Mssieurs les commissaires du Conseil pour les affaires de commerce. 2 juillet 1722 ", AN, F12 725.

<sup>21</sup> "Demande de pension de Bruyard", AN, F12 727.

<sup>22</sup> "Brevet de pension de retraite", "Commission donnée par M. De Secheltes".

was increased through an *arrêt du conseil* (order of the council) on February, 29<sup>th</sup> 1716 to 10,000 livres, including 6,000 livres for himself and the rest to for seven provincial employees of the general farms who were in charge of sending abstracts<sup>23</sup>. In 1783, this sum had not changed. Some precisions are in order, though. First, this sum included not only the compensation of the director, but also the compensation of book-keepers, which were an number that might have changed. In 1716 Grandval argued that he was « obligé d'employer et de payer quatre commis » for the balance of trade. Bruyard made do with only two book-keepers. The savings might have to 2,000 livres that Bruyard could add to his personal income<sup>24</sup>. Second, the last two directors of the balance of trade, Baroz et Bruyard, were *cumulards* : they got compensations both for being first book-keeper of the director of trade and for being in charge of the balance of trade<sup>25</sup>. In this way, Bruyard earned, starting in 1756, on the one hand 6,000 livres from the general farms for the balance of trade and, on the other hand, 5,000 livres as compensation for being first commis, to which he adds 1,200 livres for office expenses from the *caisse du commerce*. After 1767, he received a further annual gratification from the *caisse du commerce* of 3,000 livres, for a gross total of 15,200 livres et a net total of 11,800 livres<sup>26</sup>. One must notice as well that the remuneration of the book-keepers who did not work on the balance of trade was not included in these compensations: the total cost of Bruyard's bureau as first *book-keeper* in 1777 was 12,912 livres paid by the

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<sup>23</sup> "Arrêt du conseil du 29 février 1716".

<sup>24</sup> In 1778, estimates the costs of running the Bureau of the balance of trade at 3,600 livres, including 1,200 for rent. This leaves between 2,000 and 2,400 livres for the compensation of the two book-keepers depending on whether office expenses (paper, ink, etc...) are included or not in the rent ("Commission donnée par M. De Sechelles"). In his 1787 memorandum, Bruyard affirms that he paid in the early 1780 2,200 livres to his two commis: 1,500 for the first one and 700 for the second one ("Mémoire de 1787", 1787, Bruyard, AN, F12 1834A). These estimates are very close to the ones given by the *intendant des finances* Boullongne for his office in 1764: 1,200 livres for his first commis, 800 for the the second one and 400 for office expenses ("Etats des frais de bureau de Mr de Boullongne *intendant du commerce*", AN, F12 823).

<sup>25</sup> Even if these two responsibilities are clearly administratively separated, as they employ two distinct offices, this separation is actually not very clear as only one man heads both.

<sup>26</sup> "Commission donnée par M. De Sechelles".

caisse du commerce<sup>27</sup>. Finally, he benefited from 1783 from a rather generous pension of 8,000 livres (including 3,800 for his former job at the trade balance)<sup>28</sup>.

## **1.2. The position of the Bureau in the French economic administration**

From an administrative point of view, the production of the trade balance was under the responsibility of a *directeur du commerce* (director of trade). This function, less studied than that of comptroller general of finances, was no less central in the administration of trade and manufactures. The *directeur* supervised all the *intendants du commerce* and, more generally, all matters related to trade had to be directed to him. From 1713 to 1783, nine people held the function<sup>29</sup>. Until 1744, it was associated with the function of *président* of the Council of trade. The official correspondence of the balance of trade, especially with the *chambres de commerce*, was signed by the director of trade and not by the director of the balance of trade. This also shows how junior was the director of the balance of trade from an administrative point of view.<sup>30</sup> The director of trade was generally the one who initiated changes in work methods and the presentation of the balance of trade (see next session). These changes were finally very limited in number, except during the office of Trudaine the father.

On the whole, the institutional history of the first Bureau of the balance of trade can be divided in three distinct periods. The first one stretches from 1713 to the early 1740s. It is characterized by the important role of the General farms in establishing the trade balance. It is a farmer general, Grandval, who was in charge of its redaction ; when in 1738 he became

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<sup>27</sup> "Etats des frais de bureau de Mr de Boullongne intendant du commerce".

<sup>28</sup> "Brevet de pension de retraite".

<sup>29</sup> Henri d'Aguesseau (1705-1716), Michel Jean Amelot de Gournay (1716-1724), Michel Robert Le Peletier des Forts (1724-1726), Louis Fagon (1726-1744), Antoine-Louis Rouillé (1744-1749), Daniel Charles Trudaine (1749-1769), Jean Charles Philibert Trudaine de Montigny (1769-1777), Jacques Necker (1777-1781), Joly de Fleury (1781-1783).

<sup>30</sup> "Correspondance passive...".



unable to do it correctly, it is another man from the Farms, La Borde, who was chosen to assist him.

From that point of view, the replacement in 1740 of La Borde by Baroz, who became the director of the balance of trade in 1747, was more important than it looks. It signifies that the bureau took its distance from the General farms. This was confirmed when Rouillé succeeded to Fagon as *directeur du commerce* in 1744. As intendant of finances, Fagon was also heading the department of General Farms. His successor, intendant of commerce and *Maître des requêtes*, latter counsellor of state, had no relation with the General farms. A second period opened then that will last until the reorganisation of the Bureau by Necker in 1777 and during which the Bureau of the balance of trade was dominated by the administration of commerce and its director. This period of independence from the General farms is manifested by a gradual increase in the sophistication in the presentation of the trade balance (see next section). Furthermore, independence had the advantage of allowing an ex-post control on the activity of the General farms, as Bruyard explained in 1787<sup>31</sup>.

The abolition of the four offices of intendant de finances, including the one of Trudaine de Montigny, announced the third and last period the first Bureau of the balance of trade. Starting in 1777, Bruyard reported to the *directeur général des finances*, Necker. At the beginning, Necker, was busy with major reforms in the finances of the realm and kept Bruyard as the head of the Bureau and did not intervene in his work. This did not last. In early 1779, he took the physiocrate Du Pont out of his semi-retirement to ask him for a report on the balance of trade<sup>32</sup>. Following this report, Necker decided to bring the Bureau closer to the

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<sup>31</sup> « On a été d'autant plus surpris de voir ce travail entre les mains des Fermiers Generaux qu'ils semblent être intéressés à ne jamais le rendre complet. En effet, c'est par la Balance du Commerce que le Ministre peut juger d'un coup d'œil des diverses branches de Commerce qui ont fleuries, ce qu'elles ont produites à la General farms et sur lesquelles par consequent on peut faire supporter aux fermiers des augmentations dans leur bail. », "Mémoire de 1787...", Bruyard.

<sup>32</sup> Named inspecteur général du commerce under Turgot's government, Du Pont had been bereft of all administrative responsibility when Turgot fell. He did keep however an annual pension of 8,000 livres, even if

General farms. A new Bureau progressively replaced Bruyard's, who was finally sent into retirement in May 1783 (he was then 76 years old).

## **2. Methods of the first Bureau of the balance of trade**

Three different types of sources give us information on the methods of the first Bureau. Administrative documentation itself, for example the requests for documents and the answers, is very scant. This is why the exchanges preparing and following Du Pont's memorandum written in 1779 are so interesting. In particular, the notes written by Bruyard to answer it provide us with more information than the famous 1787 memorandum published by Romano<sup>33</sup>. Finally, the statistical production of the Bureau which has survived are indispensable to see *in extenso* what was actually the result of the methods used by the first Bureau.

### **2.1. Information sent by the collectors of the General farms**

The *arrêt du conseil* from March 18<sup>th</sup>, 1713 indicated that the Bureau worked from *extraits* (abstracts) of the *états de sortie et d'entrée* of commodities to and from France that were kept by the bureaus of the General farms, which was in charge of the collection of duties in France. These were situated both in the *Cinq Grosses General farms*, in the provinces *réputées étrangères* or *d'étranger effectif* (Franche-Comté and Bayonne) subject to local duties, including a number of free ports (Marseilles, and Dunkerque). Sending these abstracts was extra work for the General farms collectors. To ease their job, *ad hoc* book-keepers were hired. First in the office of *la Romaine* in Rouen (i.e. the custom house): he was paid 1,000 livres in Octobre 1715. Another one was hired in Lyon for the exports, especially during the *foires franches* (free of duties fairs) and at Bordeaux and Saint-Malo, with a compensation of

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he had nothing to do. The best book on the life and career of Du Pont de Nemours is: Ambrose Saricks, 1965, *Pierre Samuel Du Pont de Nemours*. Lawrence.

<sup>33</sup> Romano, "Balance du commerce della Francia..." .

800 livres from April 1716. Furthermore, additional compensations of 200 livres were allocated to the collectors of the custom houses of Bayonne, Nantes et Saint-Valery sur Somme starting at the same time. These compensations were then extended: 400 livres to the collector in Lille (August 29<sup>th</sup> 1720), 200 livres to the collectors in La Rochelle and Dunkerque (respectively on May 23<sup>rd</sup> 1731 and June 26<sup>th</sup> 1731). The compensation of the collector of Bayonne increased to 400 livres from April 8<sup>th</sup> 1726<sup>34</sup>. Waged book-keepers and collectors kept their jobs for a long time. In 1779, they had been in their job for twenty years on average<sup>35</sup>.

In 1716, the collector in Rouen was supposed to send abstracts to the Council of Commerce (which transmitted them to the Bureau of the balance of trade) every week<sup>36</sup>. As the Bureau only produced annual reports, an easy way to make the work easier was to wait longer between two abstracts. In 1740, according to Orry, the abstracts had to be sent every month<sup>37</sup>. In the 1770s, some bureaus sent their abstracts every month ; other did so only every term<sup>38</sup>. The more or less complete abstracts Du Pont de Nemours could work on for 1775 were 800 for 138 bureaus<sup>39</sup>: most bureaus sent their abstracts every term.

In 1779, Du Pont could only work on 1775 abstract sent by 138 bureaus de General farms (out of 230 bureaus in correspondence with the Bureau). This was explained by Bruyard by

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<sup>34</sup> "Arrêt du conseil du 29 février 1716" confirmed by "Appointement des Commis à la Balance du Commerce dans les Provinces", NEHA, Archives Bruyard, Item 100-101: Amsterdam. In one of the 1779 documents, Bruyard does not mention the gratifications of the employees in Nantes and Saint-Valery ("2e Réponse sur les manquants", 21/03/1779, Bruyard, NEHA, Archives Bruyard, item 51: Amsterdam), but this might be a simple mistake. He mentions them in the "Historique sur le travail de la balance du commerce", 20/08/1779a, Bruyard, NEHA, Archives Bruyard, item 74: Amsterdam

<sup>35</sup> "Historique sur le travail...", Bruyard. The 1787 memorandum mentions that they were other collectors paid from time to time, but we did not find any trace of that. Romano, "Balance du commerce della Francia..." , p. 1295. "Historique sur le travail...", Bruyard

<sup>36</sup> "Arrêt du conseil du 29 février 1716"

<sup>37</sup> "Orry sur successeurs de Grandval", 17/11/1740, Orry, NEHA, Archives Bruyard, item 67: Amsterdam

<sup>38</sup> "Lettre de Dupont à Bruyard sur les pièces manquantes dans la balance", 14/03/1779, Du Pont, NEHA, Archives Bruyard, item 48: Amsterdam. Among the abstracts that were sent every term: Auch, Tarascon, Bordeaux, Lille, Narbonne, Lorient, Saint-Quentin. Among those that were sent every month: Triacourt, Charleville, Dijon, Nantes, La Rochelle, Lyon, Saint-Malo, Marseille.

<sup>39</sup> "Sur le travail qui sert à former les États annuels de la balance du commerce", 07/05/1779, Du Pont, NEHA, Archives Bruyard, item 72: Amsterdam and "Sur le travail qui sert à former les États annuels de la balance du commerce", 1779, Du Pont, Hagley Museum & Library, Fond Pierre Samuel Dupont de Nemours, W2 - 4596.

the fact that most abstracts were thrown away after being used as they formed considerable masses of paper<sup>40</sup>. This is also explained by the fact that not all bureau were asked to send abstracts, both because of changes in the General farms *directions*<sup>41</sup> and because bureaus for the interior of France were only interesting for the goods put under *plomb* or subject to an *acquis à caution* (i.e. which paid duties in another bureau than their entry bureau, someone having guaranteed this payment). These goods were only a small part of external trade, except for the ones which had been registered in the bureaus of the large trading towns<sup>42</sup>. We could only find one of these abstracts: the exports of the first 1781 term from the bureau of Marseille<sup>43</sup>. It is a list by destination of goods giving quantities and prices per good and per destination.

According to Du Pont, one eighth of the abstracts did not mention the destination or the origin country of goods: this had to be compensated by conjectures – very easy ones according to Bruyard, as these bureaus were most of the time on French borders<sup>44</sup>. Yet, Bruyard did complain about the lack of zeal of the collectors, and explained it by the fact that most were not paid for this work. One eighth of the bureaus did not mention the origin or destination *généralité* (province) in France (this is the case for the abstracts from Marseille we just mentioned). Still, it seems that all did indicate the nature and quantity of goods and that thirteen also gave prices (Bordeaux, Lyon, Dijon, Saint-Malo, Saint-Quentin, Péronne and other smaller ones according to Du Pont de Nemours. This might have changed after his intervention: Marseille gave its prices in 1781).

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<sup>40</sup> "Lettre sur les états manquants et leur destruction", 18/03/1779, Bruyard, NEHA, Archives Bruyard, item 49-50: Amsterdam.

<sup>41</sup> "2e réponse...", Bruyard.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

<sup>43</sup> "Marseille - Balance du commerce du quartier de janvier 1781 des marchandises sorties de France. 00-01-1781. 1 pièce.", janvier 1781, ?, NEHA, Archives Bruyard, item 140: Amsterdam.

<sup>44</sup> "Sur le travail..." (NEHA)", Du Pont and "Sur le travail qui sert à former les États annuels de la balance du commerce", Du Pont; "Observations sur la lettre de M. Dupont concernant la balance du commerce", 20/08/1779b, Bruyard, NEHA, Archives Bruyard, item 73: Amsterdam

One fourth of the abstracts indicated exports to or imports from provinces which were part of the *étranger effectif* inside the realm: Franche-Comté, Alsace, Lorraine, Marseille, Dunkerque, Bayonne, Lorraine. Most abstracts included them in their reports on imports and exports from the realm. This trade – except the one with Lorraine, which was associated with Germany – was excluded from the balance of trade, leading to the omission of goods passing through these provinces to be sold abroad, or being imported from abroad through these provinces. This was not supposed to be an issue for Franche-Comté, Marseille, Dunkerque and Bayonne: the General farms had collectors there who send there own abstracts (sometimes for a compensation, like in Dunkerque and Bayonne). Two documents from 1717 discuss the way data was to be collected from the free ports of Dunkerque and Marseille: the final arrangement was different from the one they mention<sup>45</sup>. The General farms was never able to convince the traders of Dunkerque that they should register the destination of their exports: the trade of Dunkerque is not included in general trade<sup>46</sup>. Franche-Comté, Marseille and Bayonne are not mentioned as being an issue in the rest of the documentation of the first Bureau.

Fraud and contraband could obviously have been a problem. The existence of bad relations between traders and employees of the General farms suggest that the latter did defend the interest of the General farms properly, in contrast for example with their equivalent in the West Indies. This excludes that there had been any systematic large-scale fraud which would have needed some sort of connivance between these groups<sup>47</sup>. Available figures on

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<sup>45</sup> "Discussion de la construction de la Balance à Dunkerque et Marseille", 1717, ?, Archives Nationales, F/12, 1834A: Paris

<sup>46</sup> "Observations sur la lettre de M. Dupont...", Bruyard, p. 14.

<sup>47</sup> That opinion is shared by Morineau (Morineau "Commerce franco-néerlandais...", 1965, p. 182). See also Jean Tarrade, 1972, *Le Commerce colonial de la France à la fin de l'Ancien Régime : l'évolution du régime de l'exclusif de 1763 à 1782*. Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 892 p , p. 717 and 723 which contrasts this with the situation in the West Indies. On the practical organization of the custom duties and the hassles it created: Jean Clinquart, 1995, *Les Services extérieurs de la Ferme générale à la fin de l'Ancien Régime : l'exemple de la direction des fermes du Hainaut*. Paris: Comité pour l'histoire économique et financière de la France, 376 p and Jean Clinquart, 1998, "Le Dédouanement des marchandises sous l'Ancien Régime," dans *La*

contraband show that it was relatively weak compared to global trade numbers, even if it could be a large share of the flows of some goods (tobacco) or in some directions (with Great-Britain)<sup>48</sup>.

## 2.2. The information given by the *chambres de commerce* and the *intendants*

The information sent by the bureaus of the General farms allowed the Bureau of the balance of trade to compile summaries (*déclarations*) including all the imports and the exports for each direction of the General farms. These two summaries included the name of goods, the quantities and, according to Bruyard, the trade partners<sup>49</sup>. They were sent through the *Contrôleur général* of finances to eleven *chambres de commerce* (Amiens, Bayonne, Bordeaux, Dunkerque, Lille, La Rochelle, Lyon, Marseille, Montpellier, Nantes et Rouen) and two *intendants* (Dijon et Chalons) so that they could fill in the prices<sup>50</sup>. The *intendants* seemed to have asked their *subdélégués* to use the information given by local traders to answer the questionnaire<sup>51</sup>.

Cover letters to the summaries sent between 1719 and 1780 were kept in La Rochelle<sup>52</sup>. The date each letter was sent is an indication of the speed of the first synthesis work of Bureau: see Figure 1. After a period for the Bureau to get up to speed, they were sent between

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*Circulation des marchandises dans la France de l'Ancien Régime*. Paris: Comité pour l'histoire économique et financière de la France, p. 103-144.

<sup>48</sup> Marie-Hélène Bourquin et Emmanuel Hepp, 1969, *Aspects de la contrebande au XVIIIe siècle*. Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, viii, 96 p; V.-L. Bourrilly, 1914, "La Contrebande des toiles peintes en Provence au XVIIIe siècle" *Annales du Midi*, Vol XXVI, p. 52-75 ; Louis Dermigny, 1964, *La Chine et l'Occident. Le commerce de Canton au XVIIIe siècle : 1719-1833. Trois tomes : le temps des compagnies (1719-1760) ; L'ère du thé et des dettes chinoises (1760-1785) ; L'ère du coton et de l'opium (1785-1835). Et un album*. Paris: SEVPEN, 1625 et 130 p, p. 651-668 ; François Crouzet, 2008, *La guerre économique franco-anglaise au XVIIIe siècle*. Paris: Fayard, 424 p, p. chapitre 2.

<sup>49</sup> The turn of Bruyard's sentence suggests that there were one summary per trade partner: letters always mention only two.

<sup>50</sup> List of the mailing from 1779 to 1781: "Liste des directions dont les récapitulations doivent être envoyées aux Chambres de Commerce et aux intendants où il n'y a point de Chambre pour fixer les prix des marchandises. 1778-1780", NEHA, Archives Bruyard, item 79: Amsterdam.

<sup>51</sup> "Critique sur les prix trop faibles envoyés par les subdélégués de Châlons et Langres", 1780b, Bruyard ?, NEHA, Archives Bruyard, item 78: Amsterdam.

<sup>52</sup> "Correspondance passive...".

April and May under Granval, La Borde and Baroz. The aging of Baroz brought disorder: the letters were sent latter and latter in the early 1750s. Delays were shortened after Bruyard arrived. They then slowly lengthened until the beginning of the early 1770s, and then stabilized. That might reflect the fact that Bruyard had to make do with only two book-keepers in his Parisian office rather than four for Grandval. The year the number of book-keepers was changed is unknown.

**Figure 1 : Date of sending of the summary of prices to the *chambre de commerce* of La Rochelle**



Starting with the summary for 1746 trade, cover letters indicated that they sometimes include prices suggested by collectors or book-keepers of the General farms and give the choice to the *chambre de commerce* to correct them or not. According to Du Pont, these price estimates were included in vain and were never taken up by either the intendants or the *chambres de commerce*<sup>53</sup>. This is the only change in the text of these letters. The one received

<sup>53</sup> "Sur le travail... (NEHA)", Du Pont.

by La Rochelle are similar to the only other similar letter we have found and which was sent by to the chambre de commerce of Amiens regarding trade in the directions of Saint-Quentin and d'Amiens<sup>54</sup>.

According to Bruyard, the answers were ready between the months of July or August following the end of the year of interest<sup>55</sup>. This is in direct contradiction with the list of letters, their dates and the dates of their answers for the trade balances of 1778, 1779 and 1780, which are in Bruyard's archive<sup>56</sup>. The letters were sent approximately at the same time to all chambers de commerce and intendants in the second part of the year. At the earliest, the answers were received before the end of the month, but sometimes they did not arrive before they waited until April in the second year after the year of interest, necessitating reminder letters. The Bureau was not always satisfied by the answers: the *chambre de commerce* of La Rochelle sent back an error-ridden copy of the original summary rather than the original<sup>57</sup>. The subdélégués of the intendant Rouillé d'Orfeuil (Châlons et Langres) sent 1780 prices which were way too low for the 1778 trade balance: their revised estimates only reached the bureau in June 1780.<sup>58</sup>

It was not easy to determine the right price of exports and imports with each partner and in each direction. First, the prices asked were historical rather than current. Second, prices had changed during the year. Third, goods were of miscellaneous quality. Bruyard answered to worried chambers de commerce and intendants that they had to select « le point milieu des prix » or « ni trop haut, ni trop bas, mais dans sa juste valeur »<sup>59</sup>. Eventually, either because they controlled the *chambres de commerce* or because the intendants used them as sources of

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<sup>54</sup> "Demande de prix à Amiens", 16/11/1779, Bruyard, NEHA, Archives Bruyard, item 52: Amsterdam.

<sup>55</sup> "Historique sur le travail...", Bruyard, p. 10.

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<sup>57</sup> "Observations et correspondance sur les envois de quelques états de 1779", 1780a, Bruyard ?, NEHA, Archives Bruyard, item 76-77: Amsterdam.

<sup>58</sup> "Correspondance Tolozan - Rouillé d'Orfeuil", 1782 ?, Tolozan, NEHA, Archives Bruyard, item 80-81: Amsterdam.

<sup>59</sup> "Observations et correspondance...", Bruyard ?.



information, it was always the traders that were in charge of estimating prices. It might be possible that they had an interest in presenting too negative a vision of trade in order to justify their complaints and to minimize expectations for customs income. This might have led them to under-estimate prices systematically, or at least not to report positive shock on prices.

We can only check prices when we know them and this is unfortunately not often the case. When it is possible, the comparison results are ambiguous. Tarrade has shown for example that prices used for colonial goods in the 1770s did not reflect year-to-year valuations well. Yet, the examples he gives show that the prices were not very different from real prices<sup>60</sup>. Morineau shows that the prices of goods exported from France to Holland used by the Bureau in 1750 and the prices in Amsterdam were compatible. Prices were always smaller in France than in Amsterdam. The gaps (between -20% and -50%) seem commensurate to the bulk of goods and plausible.<sup>61</sup> After 35 years of evolutions (between 1716 and 1750), the prices used by the Bureau were not too different from the real level of prices. If they had not more or less followed the long term moves of prices – even with a delay – this could not have been the case. They would have had become absurd much earlier<sup>62</sup>. It seems reasonable to assume that, even if these prices did not reflect correctly the short-term variations, they can be trusted for long term ones.<sup>63</sup>

As is now the current practice, all prices were French price. This method is not very surprising nowadays, as the usual convention is to measure the price of imports cif (costs,

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<sup>60</sup> Tarrade, *Commerce colonial...*, p. 770-71.

<sup>61</sup> Morineau "Commerce franco-néerlandais...".

<sup>62</sup> On the prices in Bordeaux: Paul Butel, 1973, *La Croissance commerciale bordelaise dans la seconde moitié du XVIIIe siècle*. Lille: Service de reproduction des thèses, Lille III, lxx/1164/258/d/156/41 p, p. 5-7. For grain prices between 1760 and 1778 : Michel Morineau, 1975, "Quelques recherches relatives à la balance du commerce extérieur français au XVIIIe siècle : où cette fois un égale deux," dans *Aires et structures du commerce français au XVIIIe siècle (colloque national de l'Association française des historiens économistes à Paris le 4-6 octobre 1973)*, dirigé par Pierre Léon. Lyon: Centre d'histoire économique et social de la région lyonnaise, p. 1-45, p. 398, note 51.

<sup>63</sup> See the opinion of Pierre Dardel, 1963, *Navires et marchandises dans les ports de Rouen et du Havre au XVIIIe*. Paris: SEVPEN, 787 and 787 p, p. 20 and the opinion of Ernest Labrousse, 1944, *La Crise de l'économie française à la fin de l'Ancien Régime et au début de la Révolution*. Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, lxxv, 664 p, p. 112.

insurance, freight) and the exports fob (free on board), which is approximately equivalent to measuring domestic prices in the reporting country. This was an issue for Du Pont de Nemours and Necker, for reasons we we will discuss later. The use of cif/fob prices was not general in the 18<sup>th</sup> century: English trade numbers were all collected fob, i.e. excluding trade costs and trade profits. Anyway, English prices were official prices which were rarely revised and did not track real prices very well.<sup>64</sup>

### **2.3. Synthesis work**

Very few documents produced by the first bureau in the first half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century have survived. According to Bruyard, Grandval established one summary per direction of the General farms. Each summary included the quantity and value of each exported or imported good differentiated by partner. These were simply the documents that came back from the *chambres de commerce* or the intendants after prices were included. These documents must have been available to Arnould to report 1716 and the chronology of trade between 1716 and the 1750s. They probably also were available to Bruyard to set up his annual chronology of trade<sup>65</sup>.

Baroz innovated by producing one summary per trade partner rather than on per direction des General farms and by adding a sheet presenting the general result and comparing it with past years. Morineau found in Saint-Brieuc recapitulations of trade with England and Holland from 1749, but they only include the most important goods in value. He also found four registers reporting trade by foreign partner for 1750 et 1751: these are not mentioned by Bruyard : according to him, there was only one summary per partner.<sup>66</sup> These registers give

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<sup>64</sup> Ralph Davis, 1962, "English Foreign Trade (1700-1774)" *Economic History Review*, Vol 15, n° Décembre, p. 285-303, Ralph Davis, 1979, *The Industrial Revolution and British Overseas Trade*. Leicester: Leicester University Press, Humanities Press Inc., 135 p.

<sup>65</sup> Arnould, *De la balance du commerce...* + réf tableaux récapitulatifs du commerce ????

<sup>66</sup> "États par Nation 1750-1751", ?, Bibliothèque Municipale, ms. 84-87 (papiers Gournay ?): Saint-Brieuc.

the value, volume, destination and origin of trade goods<sup>67</sup>. Trudaine asked Bruyard to innovate by gathering in a single document the value of all exports and all imports: maybe he simply put together two summaries rather than one per partner or one per direction?

Bruyard produced five documents each year, some of which have survived.<sup>68</sup>

- One one hundred pages summary including all foreign trade, organized alphabetically by goods, mentioning the country of origin or the destination, the value and sometimes the quantity. These have been kept in Amsterdam for the years 1767 to 1771, 1773 and 1774<sup>69</sup>. All include the mention "including French Islands" : these are treated as foreign countries. Years 1771, 1773 and 1774 include the quantity of goods<sup>70</sup>. Years 1752, 1754-1761 and 1772 are in the bibliothèque municipale de Rouen<sup>71</sup>. Years 1775 à 1780 are in the archives nationales<sup>72</sup>. The missing years are 1754, 1762-6 and 1781.

- A comparison with the preceding year and a report over six years. These sheets follow the summary of the *objet general*. They indicate imports and exports by partners. These comparisons are indeed in the archives we just mentionned.

- A summary including a summing up of the impots and exports of each nation by direction des General farms. These were kept in Amsterdam for 1768, 1770-1771 and 1773-1774<sup>73</sup>. Years 1753, 1766, 1770, 1773 and 1781 are at the bibliothèque municipale de

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<sup>67</sup> Morineau "Commerce franco-néerlandais...", "États par Nation 1750-1751...", ?.

<sup>68</sup> "Historique sur le travail...", Bruyard.

<sup>69</sup> "Objet Général du Commerce de la France avec l'étranger", 1769-1776 ?-a, Bruyard, NEHA, Archives Bruyard, item 122A-122G: Amsterdam.

<sup>70</sup> "Objet Général du Commerce de la France avec l'étranger pour 1772", 1774 ?, Bruyard, Bibliothèque Municipale, Montbret, ms. 155: Rouen.

<sup>71</sup> "Objet Général du Commerce de la France avec l'étranger pour 1752", 1754 ?, Bruyard, Bibliothèque Municipale, Montbret, ms. 155: Rouen, "Objet Général du Commerce de la France avec l'étranger pour 1754-1761 et 1772", 1756-1763 et 1774 ?, Bruyard, Bibliothèque Municipale, Montbret, ms. 155: Rouen, "Objet Général du Commerce de la France avec l'étranger pour 1772", Bruyard, Bibliothèque Municipale, Montbret, ms. 849: Rouen.

<sup>72</sup> "Objet Général du Commerce de la France avec l'étranger", 1777-1782, Bruyard, Archives Nationales, F/12, 242-248: Paris.

<sup>73</sup> "Récapitulation de la valeur de toutes les marchandises entrées dans le Royaume venant des pais étrangers et de toutes celles sorties du Royaume pour les pais étrangers tant par mer que par terre 1768, 1770-1, 1773-4", 1770-1776 ?-b, Bruyard, NEHA, Archives Bruyard, item 123: Amsterdam.

Rouen<sup>74</sup>. Years 1775 to 1780 are in the archives nationales<sup>75</sup>. The missing years are 1752, 1754-65, 1767, 1769, 1772 and 1781 is lost.

- One sheet with Dunkerque's trade. These sheets can be found in Amsterdam for years 1767-1771, 1773-1774 and 1777-1778<sup>76</sup>. Years 1775 to 1780 are in the archives nationales<sup>77</sup>.

- A list of goods for which exports exceeded imports by more than 100,000 livres and one for the goods for which imports exceed exports by more than 100 000 livres. These lists were only kept in Amsterdam, for the years 1768, 1770-1 et 1773-4<sup>78</sup>.

Other documents have survived: a group of papers on the trade between France and England between 1716 and 1777<sup>79</sup>; recapitulative tables of French total trade between 1716 et 1773 along with comments<sup>80</sup>; and tables presenting the goods which exports or imports increased the most between each year from 1775 to 1780<sup>81</sup>. Most of these did not go further than putting together some numbers. A few documents include some analysis, especially the reports produced between 1773 and 1781: but it does not go much further than noticing that

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<sup>74</sup> "Récapitulation de la valeur de toutes les marchandises entrées dans le Royaume venant des pais étrangers et de toutes celles sorties du Royaume pour les pais étrangers tant par mer que par terre 1781", 1783, Bruyard, Bibliothèque Municipale, Collection Montbret, Ms. 850: Rouen, "Récapitulation de la valeur de toutes les marchandises entrées dans le Royaume venant des pais étrangers et de toutes celles sorties du Royaume pour les pais étrangers tant par mer que par terre 1753, 1766, 1770, 1773, 1781", 1755-1783 ?, Bruyard, Bibliothèque Municipale, Collection Montbret, Ms. 155: Rouen."...", Bruyard.

<sup>75</sup> "Objet Général AN...", Bruyard.

<sup>76</sup> "Commerce de Dunkerque, 1767-1771, 1773-4, 1777-8", 1769-1776 ?-b, Bruyard, NEHA, Archives Bruyard, item 137: Amsterdam.

<sup>77</sup> "Objet Général AN...", Bruyard.

<sup>78</sup> "Récapitulation de la valeur...", Bruyard, "Sorties excèdent entrées par plus de 100 000 l. 1768, 1770-1, 1773-4", 1770-1776 ?-a, Bruyard, NEHA, Archives Bruyard, item 125: Amsterdam.

<sup>79</sup> "Commerce France-Angleterre 1716-1777", 1778a, Bruyard, NEHA, Archives Bruyard, item 132-136: Amsterdam.

<sup>80</sup> "Tableau général contenant la progression annuelle de la valeur des marchandises étrangères entrées en France, comparée avec celles sorties du Royaume. Avec les observations de Bruyard sr. du novembre 1770. 1716-1773. Idem, sans observations. 1774-1782. 1 chemise. ", 1778b, Bruyard, NEHA, Archives Bruyard, item 128: Amsterdam.

<sup>81</sup> "Énumération des articles des entrées de l'année 1776, qui excèdent de beaucoup ceux des entrées de l'année 1775. 1775-1776. 1 pièce. Énumération des articles dont la valeur diffère beaucoup en comparaison de l'année dernière tant à l'entrée qu'à la sortie. 1777-1778, 1778-1779, 1779-1780, s.d. 1 chemise. ", 1782 ?, Bruyard, NEHA, Archives Bruyard, item 129-130: Amsterdam.

trade increases or decreases by partner and by good after 1777<sup>82</sup>. There are simply paraphrasing numbers: we are far from the expertise center that the second Bureau would try to be.

### **3. Transition toward the new Bureau (1779-1783):**

#### **3.1. Necker: from a trade balance to a current account balance?**

If one is to believe what is written in his famous book on the administration of finances that was published two years after the reorganization of the Bureau in 1784, Necker was convinced of the political importance of the trade balance<sup>83</sup>. Furthermore, he had developed an elaborated idea of its economic importance and wished to make the administrative practice of the Bureau compatible with this idea. Among Necker's discussion on the trade balance, several points deserve to be underlined.

Some are secondary: he emphasises that the error margin due to contraband is not uniform, but is larger for imports than for exports.<sup>84</sup> Informed by the debate between Du Pont and Bruyard (voir *supra*), he indicates as well the importance of putting in place an unified custom administration at the political borders of the realm that would integrate privileged cities and provinces of the *étranger effectif*.

Besides these points, Necker also underlines a number of issues linked to the measure of the value of recorded goods. First, the value of a good is different depending on where it is measured – one can use its value at the custom house measuring its export or at the price it was actually sold on a foreign market. The difference between these prices can be associated with various causes. Necker analyses for example the composition of the price of imports,

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<sup>82</sup> "Rapports du commerce", 1773-1781, Bruyard, NEHA, Archives Bruyard, item 86: Amsterdam.

<sup>83</sup> « C'est par un examen attentif de la balance du commerce des diverses nations, qu'on parvient à se former une première idée de l'accroissement naturel de leur fortune », Jacques Necker, 1784, *De l'administration des finances de la France*. s. l., p. 116.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*, t. II, p. 117-18.

which includes « non seulement la somme payée à la nation qui les a vendues, mais encore [le] droit d'entrée exigé aux douanes du royaume, et enfin [le] bénéfice ou l'intérêt des avances des négociants » French or foreign. Additionally, the « frais de transport, ou le fret, sont encore compris dans la valeur des marchandises ». All in all, if the transport was done on French ships for French traders, an important part, sometimes even the main part of the value of the recorded import would not have exited the French realm.<sup>85</sup> Obviously, one has a similar problem for exports when the registered prices are domestic. Prices, if the shipper or his silent partner is French, would only include part of the gain to the country. Furthermore, goods might have been only partly produced in France. Necker distinguishes the value of each stage of the good's production and the value of its associated services (transport...)<sup>86</sup>

Furthermore, Necker insists on the importance of invisibles to measure foreign relations. He indicates that one has to measure the capital balance to analyse the relative situation of countries<sup>87</sup>. Further, he evokes the importance of the expenditures by French travellers, embassies and other permanent French establishments in foreign countries which should, logically, be added or subtracted from exports.<sup>88</sup> This is quite an original reflexion. In concluding his discussion, he indicates that the information provided by the summaries of the trade balance must be completed by « les observations sur les grandes révolutions des changes, & la connaissance exacte des quantités d'or & d'argent qui s'introduisent &

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<sup>85</sup> Ibid., t. II, p. 120-1.

<sup>86</sup> On these two points, Necker's ideas anticipate on contemporaneous practices. International trade statistics distinguish nowadays between fob values (free on board – the way most exports are reported) and cif values (cost, insurance, freight – the way most imports are reported). The first one gives the price of a good when it exits its country of origin. The second one includes various costs that are necessary to take the goods from its origins to its destination. Furthermore, is it more and more common to try to distinguish the content in domestic and foreign value-added of exports or imports: Guillaume Daudin, Christine Riffart, Dannielle Schweisguth, et Paola Veroni, 2006, "Le commerce extérieur en valeur ajoutée" *Revue de l'OFCE : Observations et diagnostics économiques* n° 98, p. 129-165.

<sup>87</sup> « [A]insi la Hollande, qui fait beaucoup d'avance de commerce, & la Russie qui en reçoit constamment, ne peuvent pas connoître la mesure de leurs créances respectives, par le simple tableau de leurs échanges », Necker, *Administration des finances...*, t. II, p. 125.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid., t. II, p. 143-44. "Devraient être ajoutées aux importations, les dépenses des français à l'étranger effectuées auprès de fournisseurs étrangers et déduits des exportations, les achats effectués auprès de fournisseurs nationaux".

s'arrêtent »<sup>89</sup>. These remarks show that Necker was well ahead of most his contemporary in his comprehension of external trade and in its vision of the task of the Bureau of the balance of trade. If one supposes that what Necker wrote in his 1784 book was already in his mind in 1779, he could not be satisfied by what the first Bureau was doing, as it was only recording exchanges of goods and never tried to bypass the geographical incoherences linked to the ancien régime administration.

### **3.2. Debates around the work of the first Bureau.**

After having abolished the offices of intendant of finances and reorganised thoroughly the administration of the finances of the realm, Necker decided, at the end of the year 1778, to interest himself to the Bureau of the balance of trade. He seized the occasion of a session of the Board of trade in Decembre 1778 during which the *Tableau de la Balanceu du Commerce* (probably for 1776) was presented<sup>90</sup>. He showed his insatisfaction with the quality of the information delivered by Bruyard's Bureau, and demanded for its methods to be reformed. He announced his intention to ask Du Pont [de Nemours], physiocrat and inspecteur général du commerce, to do it. The intendants of commerce Cotte, Montaran, Tolozan<sup>91</sup> and his colleague, the inspecteur général Abeille, opposed this choice immediately. Necker then decided to get around the difficulty by asking Du Pont to write a detailed report on the methods of the Bureau of the balance of trade<sup>92</sup>. The choice of Du Pont showed political acumen. No one could suspect him of being the creature of the *Directeur général des*

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<sup>89</sup> Ibid., t. II, p. 153.

<sup>90</sup> Turgot, 1913-1923, "Lettre de Turgot à De Pont, 13 décembre [1778]," dans *Œuvres de Turgot*, dirigé par Schelle, Tom. V, p. 576. The external trade table was traditionnaly presented once a year to the contrôleur général des finances during a meeting of the bureau du commerce. It must have been the 1776 table.

<sup>91</sup> Jean-François Tolozan (1722-1802) is an important character to our story. He was from Lyon's region. Maître des requêtes in December, 31<sup>st</sup> 1765, he was named intendant of trade on December 28<sup>th</sup> 1776. He is considered as having been one of the closest collaborator of Necker. Later, he would be in charge of the whole of domestic trade and manufactures in the Board of trade starting in 1787. On Tolozan, see M. Antoine, 2004, *op. cit.*, p. 302 ; Harold T. Parker, 1979, *The Bureau of Commerce in 1781 and its Policies With Respect to French Industry*. Durham, p. 3-7.

<sup>92</sup> "Lettre de Necker à Bruyard", 15/01/1779, Necker, NEHA, Archives Bruyard, item 43: Amsterdam

*finances*, as he was intimate with his worst enemy, Turgot. On the other hand, because of his physiocratic ideas, Du Pont was opposed to the interventionist economic policies inherited from the reign of Louis XIV, of which the Bureau was part. Necker could legitimately count on Du Pont to thoroughly criticize the Bureau of the balance of trade.

Du Pont wrote a memorandum based on the reports from 1770 to 1775. He finished his work and handed it in to Necker early in May 1779 ; Necker only distributed it in early August<sup>93</sup>. It is at that time that Bruyard, learning about the memorandum, wrote two administrative notes to counter it<sup>94</sup>. Based on Bruyard's 1787, M. Béaud has seen in Du Pont de Nemours's report (which he had no access to) a virulent criticism of the bureau of the balance of trade, and gave him an important role in the process that led to the abolition of the first Bureau<sup>95</sup>. Actually, Du Pont's report had little to do with the abolition, as Necker had in all probability made his mind up about what should happen to it before he mentioned Du Pont in the Board of trade. It is true that the report is critical and has doubts about the « la réalité des résultats » of the trade balance. Yet, the issues it puts in light were for the essential well known (contraband, treatment of the *étranger effectif*, issue of prices) and Bruyard agreed they existed. Furthermore, they were not solved by the methods of the second Bureau. It is true that Du Pont criticized the price evaluations by the *Chambres de Commerce*, which he finds either too high or too low, and gave a number of reasonable arguments to prefer the price evaluations of the collectors of the Farms despite their probable undervaluation<sup>96</sup>. Yet,

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<sup>93</sup> Two copies of this report, significantly different, exist. The first one ("Sur le travail qui sert à former les Etats annuels de la balance du commerce", 09/05/1779, Du Pont, EHML, Archives Du Pont de Nemours, W2-4596) includes numerous addition handwritten by Du Pont himself. This copy bears the date « 9 may 1779 ». It seems that it is this copy that was the base of the "au propre" manuscript sent to Necker. The second one ("Sur le travail... (NEHA)", Du Pont) is clean manuscript on which two dates are mentioned: the first one is « 7 may 1779 », probably when the original document was finished. The second one, in the upper left margin, indicates « Remis a M. Bruyard l'original de cette lettre par M. Tolozan le 6 aout 1779 ». The date of May 7<sup>th</sup> is a bit strange, as it seems that this copy is a corrected version of the first copy.

<sup>94</sup> "Observations sur la lettre de M. Dupont...", Bruyard and "Historique sur le travail...", Bruyard. Both documents bear the date August 20<sup>th</sup> and Bruyard handed them to Tolozan so that he could give them to Necker.

<sup>95</sup> M. Béaud, 1964, « Le bureau... », p. 366.

<sup>96</sup> "Sur le travail (EHML)...", Du Pont, f. 12-13.



on the whole, what is striking is the contrast of perspective between the two men: Du Pont adopted a scientific point of view, lamenting about every imperfection of a objectively difficult administrative endeavour, and Bruyard saw in every Du Pont's doubts an unfair questioning of his labor. Bruyard was actually often right. For example, Du Pont flared up against the employees of the General farms who did not mention the country of destination or of origin, or who reported trade *with étranger effectif* provinces as if no part of this trade was actually only passing through to or from foreign countries<sup>97</sup>. In the first case, Bruyard replies that it is not very difficult to guess the destination or the origin because these bureaus were on land borders; he actually checked by mailing them. In the second case, the employees could not do better: the responsibility lied on the « les habitants de ces provinces » who refused to declare a further destination or origin because they did not have to as there are no bureaus of the General farms in these provinces<sup>98</sup>.

Du Pont's memorandum is a bit fatalistic, partly because his conclusive proposals to improve the redaction of the balance given in conclusion were for the most part either insignificant or, on the contrary, infeasible:

- Have clearer and more complete forms for the collectors des General farms, notably asking the name of the ship on which the importation or the exportation was conducted.

- Obtain more detailed information the trade of Alsace and Lorraine so that they can be integrated to the trade balance.

- Add a table with trade between foreign nations and the prices of foreign exchange in addition to the trade tables.

This last proposal is the most interesting, as it corresponds to the realization that it was necessary to complement the trade balance with a document that would help knowing better

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<sup>97</sup> According to Du Pont, 52 bureaus out of the 138 he studied had this issue: « c'est environ deux cinquièmes de travail [of the balance of trade], et des tableaux qui en résultent qui portent sur des bases imaginaires », Ibid. f. 4.

<sup>98</sup> "Observations sur la lettre de M. Dupont...", Bruyard ff. 11-14.

the other international flows such as service trade and capital movement. Recording navigation is only suggested as something “which would not be very useful”: it could (and would) be used to estimate freight exchanges<sup>99</sup>.

Shortcomings of Du Pont’s analysis may be linked to his theoretical positions. Like all physiocrats, Du Pont believed that the trade balance tended to be nil in the long-term. Accordingly, one can guess in his report the idea that, after all, the work of the Bureau of the balance of trade was not really useful as the balance will go back to the equilibrium by itself. The only useful information it could give was the distribution of trade flows rather than the trade balance itself<sup>100</sup>.

Du Pont’s project was less ambitious than what Necker had in mind, as is apparent when one compares the rich reflexion of Necker on the trade balance in *De l’administration des finances de la France* that was published five years after and that we already quoted (here we are guessing that these ideas, at least most of them, were already in Necker’s mind in 1779). It is therefore possible that Necker would finally never install Du Pont at the head of the Bureau of the balance of trade as he had suggested in December 1778 because his was a bit disappointed with the result. Du Pont had eventually only a marginal position during the remaining time Necker held the *direction générale des finances*<sup>101</sup>.

Ironically, the two administrative answers to Du Pont’s report by Bruyard might have had a more direct impact in determining the transformation of the Bureau of the balance of trade, leading in the process to the retirement of (poor) Bruyard. In his notes, Bruyard answered to Du Pont by underlining that improving the work of the Bureau of the balance of trade could not be done at constant cost. If the collectors were not doing a good job, that was because: «

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<sup>99</sup> « [D]’autres causes que le commerce telles que les voyages, les emprunts nationaux et étrangers, la guerre, les subsides entre les différents États contribuent aux variations du cours des changes », "Sur le travail (EHML)...", Du Pont, f. 17.

<sup>100</sup> Ibid., f. 6-7.

<sup>101</sup> See on that subject: A. Saricks, 1965, *Pierre Samuel Du Pont de Nemours*, p. 72-73.

tous ces receveurs regardent cette besongne comme un surcroit de travail dont ils ne sont pas recompensés »<sup>102</sup>. To hope for an improvement of the reports sent by the collectors, one would have to ask some « personnes intelligentes » in each bureau of the trading towns to write them up « en leur accordant des appointemens sufisans ou tout au moins d'accorder des gratifications plus ou moins fortes aux receveurs des Fermes Générales »<sup>103</sup>. More generally, Bruyard underlined that current issues with the bureau were linked to its lack administrative assets. Using the raw data coming from general collectors généraux of the Farms, data put in order by *ad hoc* commis, prices given by the *Chambres de commerce*, data coming from traders' non-binding declarations in the free ports, he had most of the time to trust all of them while being aware that their work was questionable. He had no way to change this course since none of them received proper compensation for this added burden. Furthermore the diversity of the sources, their fluctuating quality, and the small number of collaborators in the bureau prevented any elaborated statistical treatment of the data.

### **3.3. Toward the second bureau of the balance of trade.**

Necker's plan was successful. Only weeks after Du Pont's report was circulated, the farmer general Jacques-Joseph Brac de la Perrière was put in charge of preparing « un nouveau plan pour faire tenir par les receveurs des fermes générales dans une autre forme et au moyen de laquelle on puisse être mieux assuré que l'on ne l'a été jusqu'à présent de la réalité des quantités de marchandises »<sup>104</sup>. Perfectly aware of the danger, Bruyard offered his help to Brac de la Perrière as soon as he heard about this initiative. Brac de la Perrière's firmly

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<sup>102</sup> "Observations sur la lettre de M. Dupont...", Bruyard, f. 11-12.

<sup>103</sup> "Historique sur le travail...", Bruyard, f. 13.

<sup>104</sup> "Lettre de Bruyard à Brac de la Perrière", 17/11/1779, Bruyard, NEHA, Archives Bruyard, item 53: Amsterdam. Brac de la Perrière was the General farmss' representative at the Bureau commerce (1777-1791). See Pierre Bonnassieux et Eugène Lelong, 1900, *Inventaire analytique des procès verbaux du Conseil de commerce et bureau du commerce 1700-1791*. Paris.

and politely refused to meet him.<sup>105</sup> From that point on, Bruyard's days at the head of the Bureau were counted. He would helplessly assist to the process that led to his final resignation and the creation of a new Bureau of the balance of trade, as he christened it himself. Bruyard kept on working as usual, producing the trade balances for 1779, 1780 et 1781 and sending letters to the Chambres de commerce<sup>106</sup>. He might have drafted a new standard form, including prices, for the work of the employees of the General farms<sup>107</sup>. He might also have started recording the dates as which his summaries were sent to the Chambres de Commerce.<sup>108</sup> Meanwhile, the General farms prepared the new bureau without ever associating Bruyard to it. Consequently, the process that leads to the creation of the new bureau, under the control of the General farms, in October 1781, is not well known<sup>109</sup>.

Originally, the General farms had chosen a « sieur Magnas », coming from Bordeaux to head the Bureau of the balance of trade relocated in the Hôtel des General farms. It appears that Necker wanted the General farms to be in charge of the whole administration of the balance of trade, from collecting the data to writing the final reports. The fall of Necker, who quit in May, 21<sup>st</sup> 1781, changed the initial plan. In autumn 1781, Magnas was replaced by the *maître des requêtes* Louis-Guillaume de Vilevault (ou Villevault), who became the first official and paid head of the second Bureau. Before this position, Vilevault had been

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<sup>105</sup> Brac de la Perrière answers (le 19 novembre 1779) : « Permettés que je diffère de vous donner un rendez-vous fixe... », "Lettre de Brac de la Perrière à Bruyard", 19/11/1779, Brac de la Perrière, NEHA, Archives Bruyard, item 54: Amsterdam.

<sup>106</sup> "Sur les projet de lettre joints aux observations sur la Balance du Commerce", 1779, NEHA, Archives Bruyard, item 75: Amsterdam.

<sup>107</sup> "Modèle d'Etats pour les receveurs des Fermes", NEHA, Archives Bruyard, item 105-6: Amsterdam.

<sup>108</sup> "Liste des directions...".

<sup>109</sup> For the reasons that have been explained before, there are no document in the Bruyard Archives that allow a detailed reconstruction of what happened between Fall 1779, when Brac de la Perrière was asked to establish a reform plan and the end of 1781. The circular to the collectors des General farms written by the successor of Necker, Joly de Fleury, bearing the date Octobre, 22<sup>nd</sup> 1781, confirmed the official existence of the new Bureau. "Instruction à la Ferme Générale sur les registres à établir pour la Balance du Commerce (deux versions)", 22/10/1781, Joly de Fleury (pour la Compagnie ?) NEHA, Archives Bruyard, item 84: Amsterdam and Béaud "Bureau de la Balance du Commerce...", p. 361.

*intendant du commerce extérieur et maritime* for more than 10 years<sup>110</sup>. In parallel with his appointment, Joly de Fleury, the new *Directeur général des finances*, made him *commissaire du conseil des finances*” in charge of the General farms. The appointment of Vilevault is a sign of the will of Joly de Fleury, to come back, at least to some extent, to the former scheme in which both the General farms were not alone in charge of the Bureau of the balance of trade.

Furthermore, the dismissal of Bruyard did not follow immediately the appointment of Vilevault. It only happened in May 1783<sup>111</sup>. All the data accumulated for 1780 and 1781 were still collated by Bruyard and his two book-keepers. The new Bureau, which started functioning in late 1781, collected external trade data beginning only for the year 1782 and according to a different method (see *infra*).

Thus, the two Bureau coexisted for some time, but they were two distinct administrative units. Whereas the first Bureau was simply an extension of the *direction générale du commerce* headed by a first book-keeper, the second Bureau had a much more official administrative existence, confirmed, among other things, by the facts that it figured in the *Almanach royal* as soon as 1782, and that it was headed by a *maître des requêtes*<sup>112</sup>. From the

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<sup>110</sup> Louis-Guillaume de Vilevault was born in Paris, parish of Saint-Eustache, on February 8<sup>th</sup> 1716. He became *maître des requêtes* on May, 24<sup>th</sup> 1759 and president of the Grand conseil on December, 18<sup>th</sup> of the same year. *Commissaire du roi* to the Compagnie des Indes on September 30<sup>th</sup>, 1760, he becomes *Lieutenant-général en second de la capitainerie des chasses de Vincennes* on April 4<sup>th</sup>, 1762. Freed from his commission to the Compagnie des Indes, he becomes *commissaire* for the liquidation of Canada's debts. He lives for this job in London in 1765. Following this mission, he is named by the *secrétaire d'Etat à la marine*, the duc de Praslin, *intendant du commerce extérieur et maritime* allowed to seat and to deliberate in the Bureau du commerce on November 16<sup>th</sup> 1767. His compensation is then 6,000 livres, to which 2,400 livres are added for office expenses. He is confirmed in his job in 1776 by the *maréchal de Castries*. Very “en cour” under Joly de Fleury, he is able to stay *intendant* while he heads both the Bureau of the balance of trade and the Department of the General farms *générales* starting in summer or fall 1781. He keeps these jobs under the short stay of d'Ormesson in office. At the end of 1783, he lets go slowly all his positions before being charged with *contrôle général* of the *bureaux des finances* until his death in May, 16<sup>th</sup> 1786. See: Michel Antoine, 2003, *Le cœur de l'État. Surintendance, contrôle général et intendance des finances 1552-1791*. Paris, p. 456, 512, 529, 535-36 ; Michel Antoine, 2004 (nouvelle édition), *Le Gouvernement et l'administration sous Louis XV*. Paris, 352 p, p. 243 and "Dossier personnel de Vilevault", AN, Marine, C7 350.

<sup>111</sup> On Bruyard's *brevet de pension*, the day mentioned in May, 7<sup>th</sup> 1783: "Brevet de pension de retraite".

<sup>112</sup> Béaud "Bureau de la Balance du Commerce...", p. 361-63. Most of the high ranking members of the royal administration came from corps of the *maîtres des requêtes*. See Vivian Gruder, 1968, *The Royal Provincial Intendants: A Governing Elite in Eighteenth-Century France*. Ithaca.

beginning, the status of the second Bureau commerce were much more prestigious than the status of the first one.

There is also a clear difference in the means put at the disposal of the two Bureaus. Bruyard had to make do with less than 10,000 livres for his compensation. Vilevault got 40,000 livres each year for his job, paid on the funds of the *caisse du commerce*. However, it is difficult to know if this was a net amount. Part of the money was probably used to pay office expenses and to compensate book-keepers. The new director also headed a much more important administrative crew. From its beginning, the second Bureau had seven collaborators to collate the data produced by no less than 521 correspondents in the provincial bureaus of the General farms<sup>113</sup>. Hence, the new Bureau was much more costly than the first one. Of the 521 correspondents of the General farms, 211 were paid for their job, even if Colonia (who headed of the Bureau from 1783 to 1787) wrote that approximately sixty of them only got a minimal compensation of 24 livres tournois. All in all, 30,000 livres were used to pay of the collaborators in the bureaus of the General farms: this implied that the 151 that got more than 24 livres had on average 160 livres. By contrast, from 1786 on the clerks of the *amirauté*, would ask for at least 24 livres per report on navigation for the three free ports (Bayonne, Dunkerque et Lorient), for an annual total of 6 000 livres<sup>114</sup>. In early 1788, the total cost of the Bureau was estimated by Colonia at approximately 100,000 livres, or six times as much as the first Bureau<sup>115</sup>. This dramatic change, along with the introduction of new working methods, was at the source of important organizational difficulties that impacted on the productivity of the Bureau during its early years. According to Colonia in 1787: « Les deux premières années de l'établissement ont à peine suffi pour monter le mécanisme immense des opérations et

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<sup>113</sup>"Travail du Bureau depuis son établissement en 1782", 1787, Colonia, NEHA, Archives Bruyard, item 93: Amsterdam. Colonia was then the head of the Bureau.

<sup>114</sup> Ibid., f. 13.

<sup>115</sup> "Minutes des séances du Bureau du commerce", AN, F12 108, séance du 22 avril 1788, f. 163.

vaincre les difficultés »<sup>116</sup>. Hence, when Pierre-Joseph Colonia replaced Vilevault, who quit at the end of the 1783, the collation of data had not even started yet!<sup>117</sup>

#### **4. The second Bureau of the balance of trade(1784-1792)**

The appointment of Pierre-Joseph Colonia only weeks after Calonne's nomination showed that the head of the Bureau of the balance of trade was now considered a political position. Even if the age of Vilevault (67 years) may have provided an explanation for his departure, the fact that his successor was close to the new *contrôleur général* Calonne was probably not a coincidence<sup>118</sup>.

The career of Colonia was not very different from that of Vilevault, except that he had no previous link with the Navy department. Both were linked to the General farms administration<sup>119</sup>. Unsurprisingly, Colonia's management of the Bureau was in the continuity of what his predecessor did. Perfectly aware of the accumulated delays in collating the 1782 trade balance, he asked Calonne for a doubling of the number of people working in the Bureau, which increased from 7 to 14 in November 1784<sup>120</sup>. Yet, even with this

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<sup>116</sup> "Travail du Bureau...", Colonia.

<sup>117</sup> Ibid..

<sup>118</sup> Charles-Alexandre de Calonne was named *contrôleur general*, replacing d'Ormesson, on November 3<sup>rd</sup> 1783: see Antoine, *Le cœur de l'État...*, p. 532. Colonia's destiny was linked to Calonne's as he was replaced by Isaac Potier at the head of the Bureau shortly after Calonne's fall on April 8<sup>th</sup> 1787.

<sup>119</sup> Pierre Joseph de Colonia was born in a family of magistrates from Aix. Born on June 3<sup>rd</sup> 1745 in Aix-en-Provence, he was admitted as *Avocat général* in this city's parliament on May, 7<sup>th</sup> 1766. He was named *maître des requêtes* on November 13<sup>th</sup> 1773 and started a career in the trade and finance administration. He bought a charge of *intendant du commerce* on November, 21<sup>st</sup> 1780 and relinquished this charge in early 1784 following his nomination as the head of the Bureau of the balance of trade (effective on January, 1<sup>st</sup> 1784 as Vilevault received the integrality of the 40,000 livres for the year 1783 and Colonia got the same amount of money for the following year). He was almost simultaneously *intendant au département des Fermes générales* (January 4<sup>th</sup> 1784), job he would keep up to June 1787. He will not be back in favour before the Restoration. He died in Paris on April, 5<sup>th</sup> 1823.

<sup>120</sup> « Tout ce qu'il a été possible de faire jusqu'au mois de Janvier 1784 que ce bureau a fait partie de mon département, a été d'amener les cooperateurs en province au nombre de 521 a l'envoi periodique de leurs états d'importation, d'exportation et de navigation pour chaque mois des années 1782 et 1783. », "Travail du Bureau...", Colonia. Colonia might be exaggerating, as he is writing this to defend his action as the head of the Bureau of the balance of trade. Still, it is probably that the work had already already experienced important delays before he came in office.

reinforcement, the Bureau did not manage to catch up with the work: it is only in 1786 that the full results of the 1782 trade balance were given to Calonne<sup>121</sup>.

These delays had numerous causes. First the difficulties of setting up new working methods. Second, the Bureau was still encountering huge technical difficulties after 1784. For example, the arrêt of August 30<sup>th</sup> 1784 that allowed direct trading in a number of goods between French colonies and the rest of the world (an endeavour to stabilize the *Exclusif mitigé*<sup>122</sup>) implied that a new procedure had to be put in place to measure these exchanges as there were no bureaux des General farms in the colonies. This will not be done before 1786<sup>123</sup>. The free ports created in 1784 were also an issue.

Third, and most important, was the multiplication of the number of tasks given to the new Bureau. Whereas the collating and presenting work of the annual trade statistics in synthetic tables was the only job asked of Bruyard and his commis, the new Bureau was to provide a much wider economic expertise. On the one hand, the government ordered specific studies to prepare the negotiations of trade treaties with the United States, Great-Britain and Russia. On the other hand, the Bureau also had to measure the consequences of the August 30<sup>th</sup> 1784 decisions on French colonial trade and of a possible equalization of external tariffs. These evolutions are a testimony of the dramatic enlargement of the Bureau's activities and its growing importance in the economic organization of the realm from 1781<sup>124</sup>. More generally, one could even say that, in conformity with Necker's initial project, the nature of the Bureau of the balance of trade has changed. The first Bureau had been created out of what can be called a « basic mercantilist » vision of economic world: it was created and functioned up to

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<sup>121</sup> Ibid..

<sup>122</sup> Tarrade, *Commerce colonial...*

<sup>123</sup> "Travail du Bureau...", Colonia and "Mémoire sur l'Origine d'un Bureau de la Balance du Commerce en France ; sur sa nouvelle consistance en 1782, et sur les progrès et les situation actuelle de cet Établissement", 1788, Bureau Général de la Balance du Commerce, NEHA, Archives Bruyard, item 96: Amsterdam. Other technical difficulties that the Bureau had to solve (especially the ones linked to the free ports) are detailed in the next section.

<sup>124</sup> The two documents quoted in the footnote 123 mention these elements. The minutes de la séance du Bureau du commerce from April, 22<sup>nd</sup> 1788 do as well: "Minutes des séances du Bureau du commerce", f. 148-165.



1783 simply to know if France had a positive trade balance with its various trade partners paid in precious metal and, if this was not the case, what kind of trades bear responsibility. In contrast, in the memorandum that is trying to « prouver l'utilité du Bureau of the balance of trade», the author made clear that « que si la balance du commerce n'avoit d'autre but que de faire connoître l'établissement ou l'écoulement possible du numéraire, le bureau dont il est question seroit fort inutile, mais ce n'est point le but de son établissement »<sup>125</sup>. He argued that the Bureau's works must « diriger l'administration sur les parties de culture qui méritent particulièrement d'être encouragées, sur celle de l'industrie auxquelles on doit accorder le plus de faveur, enfin sur les traités de commerce avec les puissances étrangères »<sup>126</sup>.

Calonne was worried with the delays in the Bureau: in late 1784, the work of the 1782 trade balance was far from finished. He believed that these delays found their origins in the lack of coordination between the several departments that provided the Bureau with its raw data and used its products<sup>127</sup>. Hence, he modified the administrative structure to improve coordination. That is how the general inspector of trade and physiocrate, Pierre Samuel Du Pont de Nemours, was again associated with the Bureau. After his brief encounter with the Bureau in 1779, Du Pont was left without a clear work assignment. It was only in 1782 that, on Vergennes's recommendation (Vergennes had been state secretary of foreign affairs and secretary of finances since 1781), he took a more active position inside the French economic administration. His first mission was to study the means by which Bayonne could be transformed in a free port and the amount of the compensation that should be given to the

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<sup>125</sup> Ibid. f. 150 and 156 (Séance du 22 avril 1788).

<sup>126</sup> Ibid. f. 157. He then underlines that many recent laws and economic regulations were informed by the knowledge gathered and presented by the Bureau. Arnould or Potier use the same argument during the Revolution, at the end of 1791: "Mémoire pour servir de réponse à celui qui a été communiqué par M. le Ministre de l'Intérieur pour la confection d'une Balance du commerce", 1791, Arnould ou Potier, AN, F/12 1834B.

<sup>127</sup> « La séparation trop marquée, peut-être, entre les différens départemens, s'est jusqu'à présent opposée à l'unité de vues et à la communication de lumières qu'il faudra porter dans cette partie importante de l'administration », , 30/01/1785, Calonne, EHML, Archives Du Pont de Nemours, W2-5059. This document, signed by Calonne, anticipates on March 29<sup>th</sup> 1785 arrêt du Conseil that uses the same terms.

General farms for their corresponding loss. This work will lead to the decree of May, 14<sup>th</sup> 1784 that made Bayonne one of the four free ports for the trade with the United States of America along with Dunkerque, Lorient et Marseille<sup>128</sup>. His researches had put him in contact with the miscellaneous administrations that were important for French external trade: the General farms, with which had had negotiated the compensation linked to the change of status of Bayonne, the ministries of Navy and Foreign affairs, the *contrôle général des finances* and, obviously, the Bureau of the balance of trade. In parallel with this task, the *arrêt du conseil* of July 16<sup>th</sup> 1783 put him in charge of providing a « collection & du dépôt des tarifs & des loix commerciales des nations etrangeres », under the control of the three ministries interested by this subject matter: Foreign affairs, *Contrôle général* and Navy<sup>129</sup>. Calonne used this precedent to impose the creation of two commissaires généraux au commerce, Du Pont and Boyetet, early in 1785<sup>130</sup>. They were put in charge with organizing the communication between the Bureau of the balance of trade (which head was still Colonia) and the other administrative entities, especially the consulates, that were under the responsibility of the Navy ministry. From that point, if the Bureau still has to produce various reports and partial tables on external trade, the two commissaires were put in charge of the analysis work, of

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<sup>128</sup> The exact date he started this work is not know precisely. He might have started just after Necker's departure in 1781, but his correspondence with Vergennes on this subject only started in spring 1782. See Saricks, ..., p. 80.

<sup>129</sup> This function was created by the March 29<sup>th</sup> 1785 *arrêt du Conseil* du 29 mars 1785. The 1783 *arrêt du Conseil* is not as specific. Du Pont uses approximately the same terms in a 1787 memorandum: "Mémoire", Du Pont, EHML, Archives Du Pont de Nemours, W2-5050 and "Mémoire sur le bureau du S. Du Pont", Du Pont, EHML, Archives Du Pont de Nemours, W2-4720, f. 1.

<sup>130</sup> Edouard Boyetet was an important actor the administration of commerce at the end of the Ancien Régime, yet there is no precise source on his life. He might have been born in a Cadix French trading family. Only is career is approximately known. He was consul général in Russia for two years, probably during the 1760s. He was then chargé des affaires de la Marine et du commerce de France at the Spanish Court from 1771 to 1785. Nominated as *Commissaire général au commerce* and in charge with the correspondence with Southern nations (Du Pont was in charge with the correspondence with Northern nations). He became *Inspecteur général du commerce*, with the title of *directeur* on February, 6<sup>th</sup> 1788. He was *Inspecteur général* till the suppression of the Board of trade on September 27<sup>th</sup> 1791. We do not know what became of him after that. Numerous memoranda by him and part of his correspondence are left in various manuscript archives, e.g. "Mémoire sur le commerce", Edouard Boyetet, Bibliothèque Nationale, Manuscrits français, 10769: Paris. Boyetet had worked with Du Pont on the Bayonne issue. Furthermore, his nomination was probably made easier by the fact he was part of the Navy administration.

suggesting legislative and fiscal ways to increase French foreign and domestic trade, and of directing the correspondence necessary for obtain the data the Bureau needs.<sup>131</sup> They were for example put in charge of providing Calonne and the negociators of the trade treaty between France and Great Britain in 1786 with the necessary memoranda, analysis and statistics<sup>132</sup>.

At least in the short run, the appointment of these two commissaries did not have an immediate impact on the speed at which the Bureau did its work. It is true that it was able to produce a number of partial balances on Franco-British trade for 1783 and 1784, probably both produced before the end of the trade negotiations (1786); a report on trade with Russia in 1785 which was finished by 1786; several reports on trade with the United States (1782 to 1784 were produced before 1787 and 1786 was ready before the end of 1787). Simultaneously, the Bureau exhausted itself by producing a quite remarkable counter-factual measure, based on 1784 data, of the likely effect of an equalization of tariffs on the amount of taxes collected<sup>133</sup>.

Relations with the consuls (who were under the supervision of the Navy secretary of state) were still unsatisfactory. In 1784, Boyetet and Du Pont complained to Calonne about the unhelpfulness of the Marine administration and the delays it entailed on the work for the

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<sup>131</sup> A copy of the printed March 29 arrêt is in the Du Pont archives, cf. "Arrêt sur la nomination de Du Pont et Boyetet", 29/03/1785, Du Pont, EHML, Archives Du Pont de Nemours, W2-5060.

<sup>132</sup> It seems that Du Pont played an particularly important role. This is logical, as Great-Britain was part of his department. See Mary Donaghay, 1978, "Calonne and the Anglo-French Commercial Treaty of 1786" *Journal of Modern History*, Vol 50 (supplement), p. D1157-D1184, Mary Donaghay, 1979, "The Maréchal de Castries and the Anglo-French Commercial Negotiations of 1786-1787" *Historical Journal*, Vol 22, p. 295-312; W. O. Henderson, 1957, "The Anglo-French Commercial Treaty of 1786" *Economic History Review*, Vol 10, p. 104-12; Orville T. Murphy, 1966, "DuPont de Nemours and the Anglo-French Commercial Treaty of 1786" *Economic History Review*, Vol 19, p. 569-580.

<sup>133</sup> The aim was not, of course, to try to determine how exchanges were to be modified by the reform, but "simply" to compute the changes in total collected customs at constant exchanges ("Mémoire sur l'Origine d'un Bureau...", Bureau Général de la Balance du Commerce, p. 10). Colonia mentioned in 1787 a work that took six month and was finally given to the Contrôleur général on March, 19<sup>th</sup> 1787: "Travail du Bureau...", Colonia. **Une partie des fruits de ce travail est peut-être disponible à Rouen ? ("Evaluation des marchandises telles qu'elles étaient présentées sur le plan de réforme rédigé en 1784", 1784, ?, Bibliothèque Municipale, Montbret, ms. 850: Rouen).** This paragraph infos are taken from this document and the minutes of the April 22<sup>nd</sup> session of the Bureau du commerce: "Minutes des séances du Bureau du commerce", f. 148-165).

computation of the trade balance with Great-Britain.<sup>134</sup> The lack of trade balances with the United States in 1785 was probably also due to the Navy, as it is only in 1786 that the Navy started providing regular data on trade between the United States and the French West Indies. It seems that it was only in 1786 that the first data, dealing with 1785 or even 1784, were given by the Navy to the commissaries<sup>135</sup>.

As a consequence, even if there was real progress, it was slow to become apparent. When the protection of Vergennes, who died in February 1787, and Calonne, who quit soon after, were withdrawn, the new Bureau went through a new period of institutional calling into question. One of the first consequences of these difficulties was the justificatory memorandum by Colonia, head of the Bureau, to the new *contrôleur général*<sup>136</sup>. He wrote this memorandum, which we abundantly quoted *supra*, between April 8<sup>th</sup> and the end of June 1787<sup>137</sup>.

The nomination of the Bouvard de Fourqueux as *contrôleur général*, even if it was to hold this office for a very short time, revived the hopes of the former head of the Bureau, Bruyard<sup>138</sup>. Even if he was himself too old (80 years), he intervened in favor of his son (then *inspecteur ambulant des manufactures*), who wrote to the new *contrôleur général* (in the meanwhile, Villedeuil had replaced Bouvard de Fourqueux) to apply for the job of head of

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<sup>134</sup> Donaghay "The Maréchal de Castries..."p. 299-300.

<sup>135</sup> Under the call number F<sup>12</sup> 13101, the Archives Nationales have a number documents (letters and memoranda) sent by the consuls in Spain (Barcelone, La Corogne, Malaga, Majorque, Valence) to Boyetet or the maréchal de Castries concerning the Balance du Commerce. Moreover, a very partial exploration in the archives of the Marine in the Archives Nationales (série B) suggests that numerous other similar documents are there. One would also have to look into the archives of the Affaires Étrangères (AE/B/I et AE/B/III).

<sup>136</sup> His identity is not certain. Bouvard de Fourqueux replaced Calonne on April 8<sup>th</sup> 1787, but he stayed in office only three weeks and was replaced by Laurent de Villedeuil, who quit four months later. Furthermore, the main minister was Loménie de Brienne, head of the Conseil royal des finances, who was named prime minister on August, 26<sup>th</sup> 1787 and stayed in office till August 24<sup>th</sup>, 1788. On this troubled period, which saw several reorganisations of the finance administration, the best guide is Antoine, *Le cœur de l'État...*, p. 539-50.

<sup>137</sup> I.e. between Calonne's fall – as the Memorandum is addressed to the new *contrôleur général* – and Colonia's departure – he stopped receiving money from the caisse du commerce after the first 1787 term. "Etat des honoraires et appointements... payés par la caisse du commerce [de 1782 à 1791]", AN, F 12 728. The fact that Colonia's memorandum was in Bruyard's papers suggests it was addressed to Bouvard de Fourqueux, to whom Bruyard was close (see note 138).

<sup>138</sup> Trudaine de Montigny, Bruyard's patron, was the Bouvard de Fourqueux's son in law.

the balance of trade<sup>139</sup>. Someone had given him Colonia's memorandum: Bruyard wrote down an answer without date, but probably in the summer of 1787, which he transmitted to Tolozan. In it, he affirmed that someone (he had his son in mind) would be able to do the job faster and better with only six book-keepers and a budget smaller than 30,000 livres<sup>140</sup>. Bruyard's proposal did not meet any success. Colonial was dismissed, but his successor's profile was much more similar to his than to Bruyard's.

On the registers of the *caisse du commerce*, Gabriel Isaac Douet de la Boullaye was the next appointed as the directeur du Bureau of the balance of trade. He was a former *maître des requêtes* and provincial intendant. Like his two predecessors, he was both director of the Bureau and intendant of finances in the General farms department. Like them also, he lost his tenure shortly after the protector who gave him the job<sup>141</sup>. Douet de la Boullaye was a very discreet director of the Bureau: neither Bruyard's 1787 writings nor the minutes of the Board of trade's sessions in the first half of 1788 mentioned his name<sup>142</sup>. Even if his successor, Isaac Potier, only came in office officially in mid-1788, he seemed to have been the actual head of

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<sup>139</sup> The compliment letter by Bruyard père to Bouvard de Fourqueux bears the date April 12<sup>th</sup> ("Lettre de compliment de Bruyard à Bouvard de Fourqueux", 12/04/1787 (noté 1786 ?), Bruyard, NEHA, item 4: Amsterdam). Bouvard de Fourqueux answers on April 16<sup>th</sup> ("Réponse de Fourqueux à Bruyard", 16/04/1787, Bouvard de Fourqueux, NEHA, item 5: Amsterdam). The letter by Bruyard fils to the contrôleur général asking for the direction of the Bureau of the balance of trade is from June 11<sup>th</sup>. It includes an autographed compliment to Villedeuil obviously added at the last minute ("Lettre compliments de Bruyard fils à Bouvard de Fourqueux", 11/06/1787, Bruyard fils, NEHA, item 10: Amsterdam). Cf. NEHA, item 4, 5 et 10.

<sup>140</sup> "Observations sur un travail concernant le travail de la Balance du Commerce", été 1787 ?-b, Bruyard, NEHA, Archives Bruyard, item 88: Amsterdam, "Cette lettre en forme de mémoire...", été 1787 ?-a, Bruyard, NEHA, Archives Bruyard, item 87: Amsterdam. There are four different versions of this text in these two files, with numerous differences, but the core text is the same. Our comment is based on the cleanest copy which must be identical or at least very close to the text which was given to Tolozan.

<sup>141</sup> The main events of Douet de la Boullaye's career can be found in: Antoine, ..., p. 130; Antoine, *Le cœur de l'État...*, p. 528, 534, 543 et 551-2. Even if Douet de la Boullaye is mentioned as the Directeur du Bureau of the balance of trade for the second 1787 semester and the first 1788 semester, this office seems to have escaped M. Antoine. He is forgotten as well by M. Béaud on his paper on the Bureau.

<sup>142</sup> See "Cette lettre...", Bruyard; "Observations sur un travail...", Bruyard; "Mémoire de 1787...", Bruyard; NEHA, Arch. Bruyard, "Mémoire sur la Balance du commerce", été 1787 ?-c, Bruyard, NEHA, Archives Bruyard, item 92: Amsterdam; "Minutes des séances du Bureau du commerce", f. 1-300.

the Bureau in the first half of the year. He might have been in charge of the technical side for longer than that.<sup>143</sup>

The situation from late 1787 to mid-1788 was a bit confuse. First of all, the Bruyard's have not lost all hope to head the Bureau again and Bruyard the father expanded on his first thoughts transmitted to the Contrôleur Général in a « Mémoire sur la balance du commerce », written in December 1787 that circulated among the high administration<sup>144</sup>. In this memorandum, Bruyard defended the legacy of his Bureau and argued again that it would be possible to do better than the second Bureau for less money. His memorandum came only weeks before another reorganisation of the commerce administration, as Du Pont's and Boyetet's commissions were abrogated and transformed into general inspections of commerce<sup>145</sup>. Boyetet was named *intendant général* with the title of *directeur*: he kept his functions as an intermediary between the Bureau of the balance of trade and the other administrations. He also benefited from the disgrace of Du Pont, who was demoted to simple *inspecteur général du commerce*, i.e. his rank before 1783<sup>146</sup>. Du Pont's disgrace was linked to the fact that he was too close to Calonne; moreover, he did not show a great interest for his

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<sup>143</sup> It is interesting to notice that Potier had been part of the administration of the second Bureau since its origins, as Bruyard indicates he came to claim the papers of the first Bureau at his home and designates him as the successor to Sieur Magnas « dans la direction du nouveau bureau », cf. "Mémoire de 1787...", Bruyard, f. 10 et "Mémoire sur la Balance du commerce (NEHA)...", Bruyard, f. 9. It seems that Bruyard meant the technical direction rather than the official directeur – which he attributes properly to Vilevault elsewhere in the memorandum. Notice that we know absolutely nothing on Potier's life and career apart from his participation to the Bureau of the balance of trade. It seems probably, though, that he had been an employee of the General farms.

<sup>144</sup> This conclusion is based on the fact the memorandum is in the Archives Nationales.

<sup>145</sup> On these transformations, see "Règlement fait par le roi concernant les fonctions et la composition du bureau du commerce", 02/02/1788, NEHA, Archives Bruyard, Item 95: Amsterdam; "Arrêt du conseil d'État du roi portant nomination du Bureau du commerce que sa majesté s'est réservée...", 10/02/1788, AN, F/12 725 ; « Arrêt du conseil d'État du roi portant nomination du Bureau du commerce que sa majesté s'est réservée..., du 10 février 1788 » et "Observations sur le règlement du conseil concernant le Bureau du Commerce", Tolozan, AN, F/12 725.

<sup>146</sup> Du Pont complained bitterly about that and go a pension to compensate his loss. On that subject, see EMHL, Papers ..., W2-4777, 4780, 4781, 4783, 4786 et 4787. It must be noticed that Du Pont, even though he still was *inspecteur général* with the right to deliberate in the Board of trade did not assist to any session between February 25<sup>th</sup>, 1788 (first session after the reorganisation) and the final session of the Board of trade on September 17<sup>th</sup> 1791 before its termination: "Minutes des séances du Bureau du commerce".

commission<sup>147</sup>. Following this administrative reorganization, the slowness of the Bureau, which, in early 1788, had only produced complete reports for 1782, and maybe Bruyard's criticisms, the issue of the existence of the Bureau was discussed during the Board of trade's sessions of February 28<sup>th</sup> and April 27<sup>th</sup> 1788<sup>148</sup>. A long report by Arnaud de la Porte was read; Although, it was decided that the Bureau should survive, its budget was to be reduced. The first consequence was the dismissal of the Douet de la Boullaye and the appointment of Isaac Potier, formerly sous-directeur, in his stead. From then on the direction of the Bureau of the balance of trade was entrusted to a technician: it will be remarkably stable considering the confusion of the 1788-1790s period. Potier kept his position till late 1791 when the Bureau is nominally ended. It was then replaced by the *Bureau des archives du commerce* headed by his former assistant, Arnould<sup>149</sup>. The number of people working in the Bureau seems to have been reduced: while in 1787, Bruyard estimated that they were 20 collaborators, only 7 were left in 1794, for a total cost of 21,900 livres (1790 value)<sup>150</sup>. Meanwhile, the new Bureau started at last to produce complete trade statistics on a regular basis. A first synthesis memorandum for

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<sup>147</sup> Maybe because he was a free-trader, Du Pont was mainly interested in the trade between France, Great-Britain, the Untied Sates and Russia with which free trade treaties were signed in the 1780s (there are very few documents linked to the administrative life of the Bureau of the balance of trade left in his papers). Furthermore, starting in late 1786, he was more and more occupied the preparation of the assemblée des notables, which mobilized part of his office's means (one book-keeper, three clerks full-time and the head of his office, part-time, amounting to more than one-third of his total work force). See Saricks, ..., p. 99-144 and "Préparation de l'assemblée des notables", Du Pont, EHML, Archives Du Pont de Nemours, W2-4723.

<sup>148</sup> As we did not find any direct or indirect references to Bruyard's memorandum in the administrative documents and correspondence in 1788 or latter, it is not sure it had any impact on the discussion that took place in the Bureau du commerce. It appears that the question was initiated by Lambert and the distribution of a brochure that the Bureau of the balance of trade had printed early in 1788 and which was named « Mémoire sur l'origine d'un bureau of the balance of trade... ». This brochure was largely a copy of Colonia's memorandum. It was distributed to every assistant on the February 28<sup>th</sup> session.

<sup>149</sup> Daudin, *Rôle du commerce...*, p. 193; Béaud "Bureau de la Balance du Commerce...", p. 364-65.

<sup>150</sup> "Mémoire sur la formation de la balance du commerce", 1796 ?, Arnould, AN, F/12 1834B. The auther is Ambroise Marie Arnould, director since October 13<sup>th</sup> 1792. One must notice that at this time, the level of French trade was much smaller than in the late 1780s, which might explain part of the budget cuts.

1787 was produced in December 1788<sup>151</sup> and it appears that the following years trade balance (except 1791) were computed up to at least 1793<sup>152</sup>.

## **5. Les méthodes du second Bureau**

Sources that allow us to understand how the second Bureau worked are similar to the ones available for the first one. Administrative documentation is more complete, though. We have two versions of the letters sent to General farms giving them the necessary instructions to collect data in 1781 and a print out of latter instructions (Montpellier ???).<sup>153</sup> Part of what the bureau des General farms sent from 1787 to 1792 on trade and navigation has survived as well.<sup>154</sup> Different reports are also very useful, especially the ones by Colonia, Arnould and Potier. Finally, again, a number of “products” have reached us and allow us to gauge the work that was done.

### **5.1. Data sent by the employees of the General farms**

In contrast with the situation with the first bureau, information only travelled once between the provinces and the Bureau of the balance of trade in Paris. The *Chambres de commerce* and the intendants were not asked for prices. Only the method imposed to the employees of the General farms assured the quality of the raw data. Two versions describing this method in the early 1780s and one describing it in the late 1780s survive.<sup>155</sup> Collectors of

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<sup>151</sup> "Mémoire sur le commerce extérieur de la France, tant avec les puissances européennes, qu'avec les Levantins, les nations barbaresques, et les anglo-américains pendant l'année 1787", NEHA, Special collections, 596, 1: Amsterdam, 97 pages.

<sup>152</sup> "Résultats de la blance du commerce de 1777 à 1793 fournis au Comité de salut public à la Commission d'Agriculture et à celle du Commerce -- Arrêté du 5 frimaire an II, 4 Bre an III ", 1792, AN, F12 1675B (-).

<sup>153</sup> "Instruction à la Ferme Générale...", "Instruction à la Ferme Générale sur les registres à établir pour la Balance du Commerce (deux versions)", 31/10/1981, Portier pour M. Richard NEHA, Archives Bruyard, item 85: Amsterdam.

<sup>154</sup> "Envoi des bureaux des fermes au bureau de la balance du commerce", 1787, AN, F12 1665, "Envoi des bureaux des fermes au bureau de la balance du commerce", 1789, AN, F12 1666 et 1667, "Envoi des bureaux des fermes au bureau de la balance du commerce", 1790, AN, F12 1668-1669, "Envoi des bureaux des fermes au bureau de la balance du commerce", 1791, AN, F12 1670-1671, "Envoi des bureaux des fermes au bureau de la balance du commerce", 1793, AN, F12 1675B.

<sup>155</sup> "Instruction à la Ferme Générale..." et "Instruction à la Ferme Générale...".



the General farms had to keep one or two registers, depending on the importance of the bureau, of at least 48 sheets, one for imports and one for exports. They had to register all goods, whether subjected to duties, exempted or seized.<sup>156</sup> The border bureaus were to collect the information by weighting the goods themselves, or using the waybills or the documentation of the *acquis à caution*. In the harbors opened to entrepôt trade, the comptrollers of the bonded warehouses had to do the same.

The employees were then to use these registers to send two mensual reports before the 10<sup>th</sup> of the month to the general collectors. The general collectors had to send their own reports and the summary of the reports sent by their junior bureaus to Paris before the end of the month. The registers themselves were sent to Paris each year at the same time as the duty account registers to be compared and checked<sup>157</sup>. Goods were to be organized by alphabetical order, at least one page per letter mentioning the name of goods, the total quantities, origin and destination. This is different from the first Bureau, for which registers were organized per destination. We found monthly reports for... The ones from 1793 have different columns (Arnould had new forms printed in 1792, marked with “Archives du Commerce”), but they are indeed alphabetical, one per bureau, bearing prices, quantities, destination, and total value. For exports, the French origin is sometimes given.<sup>158</sup> According to Colonia’s memorandum, import and export reports had to mention the type of register of the General farms the information was taken from and the day, number, and folio of the registration: we did not find this information in the monthly reports.

Paradoxically, considering how important was the debate on this subject, the 1781 letters do not say much about where prices were supposed to come from. The registers or monthly reports that have survived show that these were determined by the collectors in each bureau.

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<sup>156</sup> "Travail du Bureau...", Colonia, f. 3.

<sup>157</sup> "Instruction à la Ferme Générale...", f. 8-9.

<sup>158</sup> "Envoi des bureaux des fermes..."

This is confirmed by a 1788 memorandum criticising the Directeur of the balance of trade's reports<sup>159</sup>. The memorandum suggests that a better idea would be to ask the *Chambres de commerce* or the traders and defends the methods of the first Bureau.

Still, the bureaux des General farms were not absurd sources for prices. They were used to pricing goods, as numerous duties were *ad valorem*. In opposition to what happened in Great-Britain, the prices that were used were regularly modified to follow the variation of market prices. Prices were fixed in different ways. In at least one case presented by Tarrade, their quality was very high. An *ad valorem* 3 % duty was to be paid in France for the imports from the French West Indies in the arrival harbors. The value of goods, at least starting in 1739, was determined through a bargaining process between representatives of the trading community and the employees of the General farms. Tarrade described the bargaining process and has shows that the General farms efficiently used all the information at their disposal (newspapers, private information, etc.) and managed to impose prices which were close to reality despite the trade deputies' protests<sup>160</sup>. This confidence cannot be extended to the prices used for goods that did not have to pay duties, as the exports to the West Indies<sup>161</sup>. The late 1791 memorandum, maybe by Arnould or Potier, regret that it was not possible anymore to ask for the opinion of the *Chambres de commerce* which had been suppressed during the Revolution. Ironically, of course, this would have been tantamount to going back to the old system.<sup>162</sup>

In addition to their reports on the exports and imports of goods, the collectors and comptrollers des General farms in the harbours had to compile navigation statements including the name of each ship, her origin (harbour and country) and her capacity.

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<sup>159</sup> "Observations sur les deux états remis par le directeur de la Balance du Commerce + Réponse du Bureau", 1788, ? (Un intendant au département des manufactures), AN, F/12 13101, 31

<sup>160</sup> Tarrade, *Commerce colonial...*, p. 760-68.

<sup>161</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 724.

<sup>162</sup> "Mémoire pour servir de réponse...", Arnould ou Potier, f. 11.

The number of bureaus of the General farms collaborating with the second Bureau was higher than the number collaborating with the first Bureau: 521 against 230. The Bureau asked them a much significant contribution. Before 1782, the bureaus of the General farms could send their reports every term instead of every month and did not have to indicate prices or navigation. The second Bureau was quite overwhelmed by the 20,000 reports and 1,529 registers he received<sup>163</sup>. The difficulty was all the higher as some of the 230 General farms collaborators were replaced with other ones who were closer to the border: the Bureau had to train many more than 300 people to do this new work<sup>164</sup> on 8,000 different types of goods<sup>165</sup>.

## 5.2. Other data sources

The 1781 letter instructed that the Alsace, Lorraine, Trois Évêchés, Marseille, Dunkerque and the islands of Corse, Bouin, Chaussein (?), Noirmoutier, etc. should be treated as foreign countries. Indeed, reports from the General farms have a column named "Ports et pays de France traités à l'instar de l'étranger"<sup>166</sup>. The measurement of trade flows at the border had not been accomplished yet. Even if the memorandum by Colonia in 1787 insisted on the fact that all imports and exports of the realm were taken into account, the memorandum on 1787 external trade by the Bureau itself confirmed that Alsace, Lorraine and the trois Évêchés were not included<sup>167</sup>. However, both the memorandum by Colonia and the one on 1787 external trade agreed on the fact that trade of the free ports (Bayonne, Dunkerque et Lorient et Saint-

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<sup>163</sup> "Travail du Bureau...", Colonia, f. 3. These numbers seem exaggerated, as two reports per bureau and per month amount to 12,504 reports. Two annual registers amount to only 1,042 registers. Maybe Colonia includes the registres de taille ?

<sup>164</sup> "Observations sur les deux états...", ? (Un intendant au département des manufactures), f. 1.

<sup>165</sup> "Mémoire sur l'Origine d'un Bureau...", Bureau Général de la Balance du Commerce, p. 6. There is a « standardized » list of goods in the AN, but it might be more recent than the second Bureau : "Nomenclature alphabétique des marchandises qui servent à désigner les rubriques employées dans les états de la Balance du Commerce", AN, F/12/241.

<sup>166</sup> For example in the registers of the Marseille direction in "Envoi des bureaux (1789)..." or in Valenciennes's register, that mention "Évêchés" in "Bureau de Valenciennes, importations 1790 et 1791", AN, F/12/1669.

<sup>167</sup> "Mémoire sur le commerce extérieur de la France 1787", p. 1.

Jean de Luz<sup>168</sup>) and the colonies, where there were no General farms employees neither for customs nor for other *régies* were from 1786 measured thanks to the collaboration of the Navy administration. In the free ports, the Navy secretary of state ordered in November 1785 that the officers of each port sent statements collated from the declarations of the ship captains in the clerk office of the Amirauté. Despite the price paid for these statements,<sup>169</sup> the Bureau could not convince them that they should distinguish between domestic and re-exported exports because of traders' protests<sup>170</sup>. In the colonies, the intendants des colonies were to collate similar statements. None of these remains in the Board of trade archives. Collaboration was quite difficult to put in place. Castries was for example very critical of the work the Bureau did based on the documents he had sent to it<sup>171</sup>.

Gunpowders and saltpetre were also an issue, as they were not part of the same General farms. Contacts were made to collect the necessary information to include them in the trade balance in 1787<sup>172</sup>.

On the whole, there is little trust to be put in the data coming from the clerk offices of the Amirauté or the colonial intendants. Each captain was supposed to declare the carrying capacity of his ship, its load, its destination or its origin in the clerk offices of the Amirauté which were watching over maritime movements. The documents were then sent to the Navy central administration: some of them have survived in the Archives Nationales in Paris. But there was no systematic check on the declarations, and the motivation to ensure that the collected data was right was small, as no tax was levied on these movements. Hence, the Amirauté is probably not a very reliable source<sup>173</sup>. The farmer general Brac de la Perrière

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<sup>168</sup> A solution had obviously already been found in Marseilles, probably the same as during the first Bureau. Saint-Jean de Luz is not mentioned by Colonia, but can be found in other documents: *Ibid.*, p. 1.

<sup>169</sup> "Travail du Bureau...", Colonia, f. 13.

<sup>170</sup> "Mémoire sur le commerce extérieur de la France 1787", p. 2.

<sup>171</sup> Quoted par Tarrade, *Commerce colonial...* : "Lettre de Castries à Colonia", 18 mars 1785, Castries, AN, Col., B/189, f° 122 v° et "Lettre de Castries à Colonia", 1785, Castries, AN, Col., B/193, f° 19/20.

<sup>172</sup> "Travail du Bureau...", Colonia, f. 8.

<sup>173</sup> Tarrade, *Commerce colonial...*, p. 726.

went so far as to judge that its reports « ne pourraient servir tout au plus que de décoration à ce bureau »<sup>174</sup>.

Castries asked for a comparison between the documents collated by the *commissaires ordonnateurs de la marine* in the harbours with the ones that were sent by the collectors des General farms to the Bureau of the balance of trade for the first six months of 1785 in the harbours where both existed. Data were similar in La Rochelle. In Bordeaux, the greffe de l'Amirauté systematically over-reported prices compared to those of the balance of trade. In Nantes, Dunkerque and Marseille, there were important differences, but in no systematic direction<sup>175</sup>.

As we have already seen, the consuls were also asked by the Bureau to send data. They send statistical reports of trade and navigation in the foreign ports they were based, sometimes obtained by bribing local officials<sup>176</sup>. Neither Colonia, Arnould or Potier ever explained what use these documents were put to: it is probable that they were only used to check existing data, or to answer specific questions not directly linked to the annual French balance of trade.

### **5.3. Synthesis work**

The memoranda of 1787 and 1788 set to the Bureau a considerable amount of documents to produce. Measuring imports and exports with the various foreign nations, American colonies, Mascareignes, India, China and Africa was already part of the first Bureau's task. The second bureau also wanted to measure how many slaves were imported in American colonies, the number of long-distance fishery operations and what they brought back, navigation between France and the various foreign powers, distinguishing the nationality of

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<sup>174</sup> Quoted by Béaud "Bureau de la Balance du Commerce...", p. 371.

<sup>175</sup> Quoted by Tarrade, *Commerce colonial...*, p. 727 : "Lettres de Castries aux différents commissaires", 30 août 1786, Castries, AN, Col., B193, f 438/9

<sup>176</sup> "Mémoire pour servir d'instruction sur le commerce de Barcelone pendant le courant de l'année 1785 et correspondance", AN, F12 13101, n°32. The text of the request of the Contrôleur général does not mention the Balance du commerce: "Mémoire sur le commerce de la Corogne", 1786, AN, F12 13101, n°36.

each ship, internal shipping done by French or foreign ships and the privileged trade with various colonies or trading outposts. All in all, the plan included 98 balances, including 9 “general ones”<sup>177</sup>. According to Colonia, nothing less would do: « si un seul de ces rapports manque ou n’est pas fidèle, il n’y a plus de Balance »<sup>178</sup>. Still, this ambitious plan was presented slightly latter simply as « le travail qu’il se proposait de faire » to answer specific criticisms on a memorandum on trade with Spain in 1782<sup>179</sup>. No document that includes these 98 balances remains in the archives.

Still, the diversity of synthesis products is striking. Many of them were printed rather than manuscript, suggesting a wide diffusion. The longest series is a list of French imports and exports by goods and countries, distinguishing privateering prizes and wrecks. The classification of goods was not very precise: imports and exports each take only six sheets of paper. The “résumés généraux” cover 1787-1789 and year V (1796-7) to 1821 under the same format (1792 is covered in another document, but that is outside our subject). Each was followed with an explicative notice explaining the modification of the balance entailed by the integration of the West Indies in « l’étendue politique », which implies that West Indian trade was known, and another notice discussing the importation of foreign coins and lingots<sup>180</sup>. The fact that France is called an “Empire” and that the presentation is exactly the same for so long suggests that these documents were created ex-post, probably during the Napoleonic period under Arnould’s supervision.

A remarkable manuscript named *Mémoire sur le commerce extérieur de la France... en 1787* is in the NEHA collection. It comments 25 tables which were supposed to come with it

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<sup>177</sup> "Mémoire sur l'Origine d'un Bureau...", Bureau Général de la Balance du Commerce, p. 5.

<sup>178</sup> "Travail du Bureau...", Colonia, f. 3.

<sup>179</sup> "Observations sur les deux états...", ? (Un intendant au département des manufactures), f. 1.

<sup>180</sup> "Résumé général de la valeur totale du commerce de l'Empire... (1787-1826)", AN, F12 251, "Résumé général de la valeur totale du commerce de l'Empire... 1782", AN, F12 249bis, "Résumé général de la valeur totale du commerce de l'Empire... 1787", AN, F12 250, "Résumé général de la valeur totale du commerce de l'Empire... 1787", AN, F12 1835.

but have been lost<sup>181</sup>. This document shows that the Bureau de la Balance did indeed more than simply record trade. It suggests an adjustment to the trade balance to take into account freight income based on bilateral navigation data by port<sup>182</sup>. It provides the number of French and foreign ships that partook to French external trade or French domestic tramping and whether they came in on ballast or loaded.<sup>183</sup> It provides imports and exports by product (the numbers are different to Arnould's) and gives indications on the exchanges of species.

An *Extrait des résultats du commerce extérieur de la République française pendant l'année 1792* provides: a table of trade for each foreign country or colony and whether trade was conducted by land or by sea; a statement of the number and capacity of ships coming in and out of France per port; a matrix of the number and capacity of tramping ships between different French ports; a list per goods of exchanges between France and the world's continents; a report on fisheries, the most often simply in volume, but also sometimes in value<sup>184</sup>.

A printed *Apperçu de la balance du commerce de la France année 1789* gives import and exports in value per product along with trade by product in volume and value with the different West Indies colonies ; it reports on trade, population, finances and armed forces of different powers and their colonies. This document looks like a huge colored poster: it is quite impressive<sup>185</sup>. A similar table for 1791 exists as well, yet only a handful of numbers are

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<sup>181</sup> "Mémoire sur le commerce extérieur de la France 1787", p. 1. The text enumerates so many numbers one should be able to reconstruct the tables.

<sup>182</sup> Ibid., p. 15.

<sup>183</sup> External trade numbers are not compatible with Arnould, *De la balance du commerce...* Domestic tramping numbers are compatible.

<sup>184</sup> "Extrait des résultats du commerce extérieur de la République Française pendant l'année 1792", AN, F12 1835B.

<sup>185</sup> "Apperçu de la Balance du commerce de la France année 1789, ensemble le relevé de la population, des finances et forces militaires des principales puissances de l'Europe", NEHA, Archive Bruyard, 128: Amsterdam.

different from the 1789 poster (number of French warships, Spain's finances...). French trade, even per good, is the same, which makes the whole table pretty suspect<sup>186</sup>.

A manuscript gives the domestic navigation in 1790, followed by another one on external navigation<sup>187</sup>. Yet, the first manuscript is written on printed forms with the "Archives du Commerce" header, suggesting it was written after 1792.

A large printed table giving trade by country and product type (including slaves) for 1787 is in Amsterdam: apart from the title, it is exactly the same as the C and D panels of Arnould's first table<sup>188</sup>.

Arnould's book includes, in addition to bilateral trade numbers per good category in 1787 and navigation data: data on trade with the United States per good category for 1778-80, 1781-2 and 1786-8; data on French trade per generality by good category with the different continents and chronological series that include notably trade between France and different continents for 1777-83 et 1784-8. It isolates data on goods from the West Indies, India and China which were re-exported and the fisheries<sup>189</sup>.

Finally, a derelict sheet from another document mixed with the reports sent by the Bureaus des General farms indicates trade for an unknown class of products per year for 1777-82, 1784, 1787-90 and 1792-3.<sup>190</sup>

The only statistical command work we found is a group of tables on trade and navigation between France and England in 1788<sup>191</sup>.

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<sup>186</sup> "Apperçu de la Balance du commerce de la France année 1791, ensemble le relevé de la population, des finances et forces militaires des principales puissances de l'Europe", NEHA, Special Collection, 596\_2: Amsterdam.

<sup>187</sup> "Résultats de la navigation entre les ports de France pour 1790", Après 1792, AN, F/12/1668 and "Résultats de la navigation avec l'étranger, entrées et sorties, 1790", AN, F/12/1668.

<sup>188</sup> "Commerce de la France à l'époque de l'année 1787", NEHA, Bro, 2616\_1 FoL: Amsterdam, Arnould, *De la balance du commerce...*

<sup>189</sup> This includes only the data coming from the Bureau's work. It includes as well a table of the income and loans put in relation with the silver blance ; the population and the contribution of the different generalities at the end of the 17<sup>th</sup> century and in 1784.

<sup>190</sup> "Lettre au comité de salut public : Extraits des résultats de la balance du commerce depuis 1777 jusqu'en 1793 inclusivement comprenant 7 années de guerre et 6 années de paix entre les puissances maritimes fournis tant au comité de salut public qu'à la commission d'agriculture et à celle du commerce d'après les arrêtés du dit comité des 9 fructidor an 2e et 4 brumaire 3e année", 27 brumaire an III, AN, F/12/1675/B.



The results of the trade balance become public in the late 1780s : controverse sur les effets du traité de commerce de 1786, puis publication des tableaux de la balance sous forme imprimé, l'ouvrage d'Arnould venant couronner cette évolution]. Whereas the work of the first Bureau always was confidential

### **Conclusion :**

Ultimate failure of the second bureau : the measure of navigation and freight is abandoned in the 90s / D'ailleurs, un mémoire d'après 1795 ne cite plus l'établissement de chiffres sur la navigation dans les objectifs du Bureau of the balance of trade<sup>192</sup>. / Still not at the borders of the realm before 1791 / The use of prices from the chambres de Commerce is looked upon with nostalgia in the 1790s. /

Sur les sceptiques of the balance of trade<sup>193</sup>

Future work : do some cross-checking of the numbers and collect the trade per goods for 1750-1792 (with lacunas)

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<sup>191</sup> "Tableaux sur le commerce et la navigation entre la France et l'Angleterre en 1788", Bureau de la Balance du Commerce, AN, F12 1834A.

<sup>192</sup> "Mémoire sur la formation de la balance du commerce...", Arnould. It is still an aim in 1791: "Mémoire pour servir de réponse...", Arnould ou Potier.

<sup>193</sup> Bertrand Gille, 1964, *Les Sources statistiques de l'histoire de France : des enquêtes du XVIIe siècle à 1870*. Paris-Genève: Minard-Droz, 288 p, p. 95-97 and Labrousse, ..., p. 112, Tarrade, *Commerce colonial...*, 1972, p. 723-726, Romano, "Balance du commerce della Francia..." , 1957, p. 1271 etc.