M. Garnier, French Chargé d'Affaires in England to Count de Vergennes, French Foreign Minister, January 19, 1775

London, 19 January 1775

[Extract]

My lord, I had the honor to inform you in my letter No. 236 at the beginning of last Nov. that the plan agreed upon by the Ministry with reference to the province of Massachusett was to forbid all trade with this province and abandon it to its own anarchy, if the governor was unable to form a Civil Chamber in order to enforce the law by civil means. I could not doubt the reality of this determination which I held from the best source. This only was what was meant by the furthering of the recourse to strength.

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The speech of the King at the opening of Parliament seemed to attribute more energy to the intentions of the Ministery according to public opinion and it was generally believed that hostilities were unavoidable. In these agitated times came the news of the resolutions passed by the Congress that were to leave no doubt as to the firmness and unanimity of the Americans. Since all the Colonies had become equally guilty, it was no longer a question to know whether or not one would continue using a few regiments and a few ships in order to deal severely with a rebellious province. The progress of the rebellion required a more extensive plan and the question was to determine whether or not European England would wage war against American England. . . .

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If I am well informed of the resolutions decided upon, they deal mainly with two subjects: first, to pass a bill temporarily forbidding any trade with the Americans; second, to give orders to the various governors of the Colonies so that they call upon all the inhabitants who disapprove the resolutions passed by the Congress to sign their names during a given time, by means of which the Government promises them efficient support against all comers, beyond which time all those who will not have conformed with this injunction will be declared traitors to their country and treated as such.

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This is the counter-part of what the Americans themselves are doing to day and it is obviously designed to provoke division among them. You will be better judge than myself, My Lord, as to the effect that can be expected, but it seems to me that it will bring civil war. The King of England apparently believed that this course was preferable to that of losing His authority by calling Myd. Chatham into his Council. He is embarking on quite an arduous journey and I wish he will come to a safe port. If he succeeds, His authority will be established more than ever and he will probably be rid for always of His fright of Lord Chatham; if he fails, he will have delayed at least for some time the coming of this Minister into His Council.

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The Ministers who have been expressing themselves for some time only in the vaguest and most reserved terms, are speaking today with more authority. The Americans are accused of wishing to destroy the act of navigation, although they avoided to attack this subject in the resolutions that they published. As long as conciliatory ways were left open, one tried here to lessen the importance of their crimes. Today, they are made more guilty than they actually are. It is claimed that it would be better not to have any Colonies at all than

support some on the footing that the Americans request, and should one give in to their claims, one should see tomorrow Ireland presenting identical ones to which one should also have to give in; finally the power of the King would become as insignificant as that of the King of Poland; should he weaken at this time. Myd. Townshend, Great Master of the Artillery, spoke to me in this tone yesterday and added that had he thought he were not able to subdue the Americans, *he would not have been so treacherous as to go that very day and pay his court to the King*.

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However, things are proceeding as usual in America. Evil is spreading rapidly; and the number of petitions that several corporations are preparing here in order to present them to the Parliament is increasing. The Corporation of Bristol agreed upon one on the 13th of this month; the merchants and plantation owners in the West Indies are doing the same thing. The latter are all the more alarmed because they are forced to send for in Europe what they used to get from the Continent and they claim that the increased expenses will cause them to lose more than half of their income. So the campaign begins today and it will not be long before the papers concerning America are presented to the Parliament that will appoint committees in order to examine them. It will be on the basis of the report of these committees that the legislative body will take its decisions; thus, within a short time, we will know what to expect.

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[P.S.] The Admiralty has just informed me that the order has been given to fit out eight corvettes for America, They are: *Senegal*, *Merlin*, *Otter*, *Cherokee*, *Surprise*, *Pomona*, *Martin*, *Zephyr*. This piece of news, My lord, seems to confirm undoubtedly the intention of which I had the honor to speak to you to stop the trade of the Americans.

1. AMAE, Correspondance Politique, Angleterre, vol. 508, 249, LC Photocopy. This document and all others from the French Archives have been translated by Professor Bernard P. Lebeau, U.S. Naval Academy.

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