THE NATCHEZ MASSACRE AND GOVERNOR PERIER

By

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Among the Indian tribes of the Mississippi Valley none attracted so much attention as the Natchez. About no other tribe is there such a wealth of information from contemporary writers. Later, the magic pen of Chateaubriand would have sufficed to immortalize them, had not the Indians taken care to perpetuate their memory by a massacre that brought the colony "to the verge of ruin."[1] This paper will discuss the number of victims that perished in this massacre and the role played by the Governor of Louisiana.

On November 28, 1729,[2] the Natchez under the pretext of a hunt came to the French settlement asking for guns and ammunition. To allay any suspicion, they repaid the French whatever they owed them. Dancing the calumet march they entered the fort, went to the house of the Commandant, bringing him presents. Then a signal was given and they fell upon the unsuspecting soldiers and settlers. Within a few hours more than 200 men, women and children were savagely murdered.[3] The estimated number of the victims varies greatly, ranging from 200[4] to 2,000. Thus Governor Perier puts the number as 250;[5] Belletrus 400;[6] Dumont, more than 700;[7] La Page du Pratz nearly 700;[8] Bossu

[1] Archives Nationales, Colonies, C 13A, 12:38. Hereafter quoted as AC., C 13A.

[2] We take this to be the correct date. It is given by Perier (AC, C 13A, 12:37); by Delaye, who commanded the militia in the first punitive expedition (AC., C 13C, 4:35, and C 13A, 5:217); letter of Diron to the Minister (AC., C 13A, 12:371v.), printed in Rowland and Sanders, *Mississippi Provincial Archives*, (*MPA*) I, 76ss.; Bibliothèque Nationale, Fonds Français, Nouvelles Acquisitions (*BN.*, Mss. fr., n. a.) 2551:23. —— In Thwaites (*Jesuit Relations*, 68:13 and 164), October is given, an error evidently, for *ibid.*, 168, November is found. The Paris, 1830, Edition of the "*Lettres Edifiantes et Curieuses...* ", *Amérique*, II, 205, has November. Bossu, *Nouveaux Voyages aux Indes Occidentales . . .* Paris, 1768, I, 74, has December. —— The sources disagree as to the time of the day: Perier, *Ibid.*, between 9:00 and 10:00 A. M.; *Jes. Rel.*, 68:164, about 9:00 A. M.; *BN.*, Mss. fr., n. a., 2551:23, 11:00 A. M.

[3] *Jes. Rel.*, 68:164; Charlevoix, *Histoire de la Nouvelle-France*, Paris, 1744, II, 467.

[4] This total is found in *BN.*, Mss. fr., n. a., 2551:23; Raynal, *Histoire Philosophique des Indes...* Genève, 1781, VIII, 116.

[5] AC., C 13A, 12:38. There is a marginal note on folio 37, giving 227 killed.

[6] *BN., Joly de Fleury*, 1726 : 211.

[7] *Mémoires Historiques sur la Louisiane...*, Paris, 1753, II, 144.

[8] *Histoire de la Louisiane...*, Paris, 1758, III, 258.

has 2,000;[9] which total is repeated by Montagne.[10] On what authority Besson bases his total is not known.[11] The first attempt at accuracy is to be found in the article of de Villiers already referred to.[12] He gives the number of victims as 238, namely, 146 men, 36 women and 56 children.[13] Later, in another article he gives: 138 men, 35 women and 56 children,[14] a total of 229. A list of the victims, dated June 1730, certified by Father Philibert, the Capuchin missionary in charge of the French settlers at Natchez, is preserved in the French Archives.[15] It is printed in the *Mississippi Provincial Archives.*[16] The total gives 144 men, 36 women and 56 children, in all, 236; but in this list are included 6 soldiers killed or put to death after torture by the Natchez following the fiasco of the scouting expedition sent by de Loubois from the Tunicas. This list is also found in *The Louisiana and Mississippi Martyrs.*[17] The author of this pamphlet says: "There should be a 6 in the vertical column . . . thus making a total of 242 men, women and children.[18] He overlooked the fact that the words, "Detachment from the Tunicas for scouting consisting of 7 men, one escaped with his life," refer to the enumeration that follows; namely, 6 were killed, and the names are then given.

Besides this list there is another one compiled seven years later and sent to France 1741, by Salmon, then *Commissaire ordonnateur.* The opening words read: "We, deputy by the [*Superior*] Council to accompany the French Army sent against the Natchez and commanded by M. le Chevalier de Loubois, campaign of 1729 and 1730, certify to have received the following declaration concerning the number of those killed at the time of the massacre between November the first (?) 1729 and August the

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[9] *Op. cit.*, I, 74.

[10] *Histoire de la Compagnie des Indes*, Paris, 1899, 114.

[11] "Les derniers Natchez, Episode de la colonisation de la Louisiane en 1730." *Revue de l'Histoire des Colonies Françaises*, XVI, 105-120. Cf. the criticism of this article in *Journal de la Société des Américanistes de Paris*, "La Louisiane de Chateaubriand," XVI, n. s., (1924), 131. In Besson's article Judge Bailly becomes the curate of Natchez; the Tunica Indians are Tromicas; the Tioux, Sioux; the Yazoo River is the Zucour, etc.

[12] *Journal de la Société des Américanistes de Paris*, "La Louisiane de Chateaubriand," XVI, n. s., (1924), 125. ss.

[13] *Journal de la Société des Américanistes de Paris, XVI*, N. S., (1924), 146.

[14] *Ibid.*, XXIII, n. s., (1931), 318, note 3.

[15] AC., C 13A, 12:57-58.

[16] I, 228 ss.

[17] J. J. O'Brien, S. J., New York, 1928, 22 ss.

[18] *Op. cit.*, 30, note 7.

first 1730. At the Natchez Post." The total is 285 men, women and children.[19]

While on the whole these two lists agree, they show many discrepancies. Some entries in that of June, 1730, are left out in that of 1737, and vice-versa. The second list gives more particulars than the first: the town in France the settlers came from, whether they came to Louisiana freely or by constraint, and to whom the wives of those who were killed are now married.[20] It includes all those who died in the massacre or as a consequence of it. For instance, entry n. 126: "Two children at the [*Ursulines*] Convent,[21] whcse names are not known;" n. 134,: "A boy 7 years old, died among the Chaouachas, whose name is not known;" n. 166: "A man at Rousseau's whose name is not known, and a child at Rocancourt's whose name is not known." This list, divided into two parts, gives in the second part the names of those killed at the Yazoo Post,[22] and ends thus:

> We, the undersigned, *habitants* of the Province of Louisiana, certify to all whom it may concern as having full and entire knowledge that those listed in the present census were really killed in the massacre of the French by the Natchez, both at the Natchez and the Yazoo Posts, in testimony whereof we have signed the same in New Orleans, on December the thirteenth, one thousand seven hundred and thirty seven. *Signed:* Avignon, tarascon, jaque judice for his wife, the widow frape, morice, Luc, Levesque, fonder, mark of the widow La Lancette called Simon, of the widow André George, of the widow Criée, of the widow Louis henry, a cross as their mark, and Prevost, deputy by the Council for the campaign of M. le Chevalier de Louboey.
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> We, undersigned, Capuchin, Priest, Apostolic missionary, Vicar General of Msgr. of Quebec, certify to all whom it may concern that the present report of people killed in the Natchez massacre is faithful to the original deposited in our hands. In witness whereof we have signed the same that it may serve and stand in place of the original document. In New Orleans, December the fourteenth, one thousand seven hundred and thirty seven. *Signed,* f. Mathias, Capuchin, Vicar General.[23]

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[19] Distributed thus: 177 men, 47 women and 59 children; one half-breed (metis); and the child killed in his mother's womb, entry n. 57; "Bideau fils d'un charon de Paris venu soldat et sa femme a qui les sauvages ont arraché Lenfent (*sic*) dans le ventre." The woman and her daughter burned by the Coroas are not counted.

[20] Cf. *Jes. Rel.*, 68:198.

[21] *Id., ibid.*

[22] Eleven names are given.

[23] AC., G. 1, 464.

From the opening and closing words of this list as well as from a comparison with that of 1730, it would seem that the first list was made use of, and that all that the survivors, mostly the women rescued later on from the clutches of the Natchez by the Choctaws, could remember, was pooled for this second compilation.

This slaughter cost the Natchez 12 men, all killed by La Loire des Ursins and his servants. Two Frenchmen only were spared,[24] and a few escaped to tell the tale.[25] When the massacre was over, the Natchez looted the French dwellings, the fort, the warehouses and the church. They spent days and nights celebrating the success of their coup: they drank, sang, danced and made merry.[26] Gruesome stories are told of how the heads of the victims were set in two rows: officers and officials on one side, settlers on the other.[27] The news of the tragedy reached New Orleans on December 2, 1729,[28] causing consternation and alarm in the town, as well as in the rest of the colony as the details reached the various posts.[29] It was only natural that people should inquire into the cause of this fearful slaughter, that they should wish to know what had determind the Indians to take such a terrible vengeance upon the colonists.

Governor Perier, Fathers Le Petit and Charlevoix, S. J., Dumont, Le Page Du Pratz, assert that there was a general conspiracy of all the Indian tribes to wipe out at one blow all the French in Louisiana. This story has been repeated by those who have taken these contemporary writers as their guides,[30] until de Villiers made a critical study of these accounts of the revolt and came to the conclusion that the general conspiracy was a myth. De Villiers

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[24] Charlevoix, *op. cit.*, II, 468; *Jes. Rel.*, 68:166, a taylor and a carpenter; Dumont *op. cit.*, II, 155, and Le Page du Pratz, *op. cit.*, III, 260, a taylor and a carter.

[25] "The number of survivors scattered everywhere was more difficult to ascertain. It has been given as 250 persons, (20 men, 80 women and 150 children)", de Villiers, *op. cit.* Belletrus, *BN., Joly de Fleury*, 1726: 211, only 15 persons escaped; Bossu, *op. cit.*, I, 74, 20 men, 5 or 6 negroes, 150 children, 90 women and as many negroes; he is merely repeating what Charlevoix has, *op. cit.*, II, 467. Perier wrote to the Minister, March 18, 1730: "We took back more than 200 women or children, all our negroes," AC., C 13A, 12:289, in *MPA.*, I, 61 ss. Charlevoix has this letter, II, 476.

[26] *Jes. Rel.*, 68:170.

[27] AC., C 13A, 12:40 v., and 116.

[28] *Jes. Rel.*, 68:162; Perier's *Relation*, AC., C 13A, 12:37. Except for a few omissions this relation is found in Gayarré, *Histoire de la Louisiane*, Nouvelle-Orléans, 1846, I, 242 ss.

[29] Cf. AC., C 13A, 12:116, for the Choctaw country; *Louisiana Historical Quarterly*, (*LHQ*), III, (1920), 534, for the Illinois country.

[30] The author of the article in *LHQ.*, VI, (1923), 551, had his doubts about the general conspiracy. G. King, in her *Sieur de Bienville*, 287, disbelieved the tale of the general conspiracy, but she relied merely on the denials of the Natchez to de Bienville. These assertions taken by themselves would not disprove the conspiracy. Cf. *Journal de la Société des Américanistes de Paris*, XXIII, n. s., (1931), 381.

says: "Perier needed[81] a general conspiracy to make people forget his guilty weakness toward Etcheparre; to justify some exceedingly regrettable measures, such as the massacre of the harmless Chaouachas who paid with their lives for the color of their skin, and above all, to find some excuse for the pitiful manner with which the repressive measures were conducted."[82] To be sure, the Natchez agreed among themselves to fall upon the French at a given date, but that they had a secret agreement with the other Indian nations is not only not proved, but all evidence points to the contrary.

That Charlevoix was influenced by Perier is evident when one compares the account of the Jesuit historian with the correspondence of the Governor:[83] when de Charlevoix does not quote verbatim from Perier's letters, he gives a summary of them, interpreting everything in the light of a general conspiracy. Father Le Petit, the Jesuit Superior in New Orleans, also writes in that vein,[84] de Rochemonteix, elsewhere so scrupulous in the use of the archives, was carried away by the grandiloquence of the Governor and based his narrative of the revolt on de Charlevoix and Le Petit.[85] For Dumont, Perier was the magnanimous hero,[86] and Le Page du Pratz merely follows Dumont.

In Louisiana, however, the story of the conspiracy was not generally believed, and we even find a mild doubt in the letter of Father Le Petit.[87] Diron, the Commandant at Mobile, says plainly that a general conspiracy never existed. De Loubois, he says, had delayed at the Tunicas, "to watch the movements of the Choctaws, wrongly thinking that there was a general conspiracy. It was in the interest of M. Perier to make people believe this, in order to cloak the reasons that led the Natchez to revolt."[88]

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[81] Cf. the genesis of the idea in AC., C 13A, 12:300 v., (*MPA.*, I, 117 ss) : *LHQ.*, IV, (1923), 358, Dec. 9, 1729. We did not find this letter in the Records of the Superior Council, New Orleans.

[82] *Journal de la Société des Américanistes de Paris*, XVI, n. s., (1924), 139; cf. *ibid.*, XI, n. s., (1919), 35 s. : XV, n. s., (1923) 224 ss., and XXIII, n. s., (1931), 329 ss., where the legend of the conspiracy is briefly but conclusively, we think, dealt with.

[83] Cf. Charlevoix, *op. cit.*, II, 473 ss., and AC., C 13A, 12:39; II, 476, and AC., C 13A, 12:300-305, (*MPA.*, I, 117 ss), (t:., etc. De Villiers thinks he finds the cause for this defense of Perier by Charlevoix in the fact that Perier had been sent to the colony to carry out Charlevoix's plan of putting Jesuits in the posts where they would take the place of soldiers. *Journal de la Société des Américanistes de Paris*, XXIII, n. s., (1931), 332. Much as we respect the scholarship of de Villiers, this is only an opinion which is not supported by documentary proof. Moreover, if Charlevoix approved of this plan he did not originate it.

[84] *Jes. Rel.*, 68:120 ss.

[85] *Les Jésuites et la Nouvelle-France au XVIIIe siècle*, Paris, 1906, I, 356 ss.

[86] Cf. *Journal de la Société des Américanistes de Paris*, XXIII, n. s., (1931), 329.

[87] *Jes. Rel.*, 68:162.

[88] Diron to the Minister, AC., C 13A, 13:137:137; Gayarré, *op. cit.*, I, 269.

Nor did the French officials in Paris believe the fairy tales of Perier. Although Louisiana was still ruled by the Company of the Indies, this affair was serious enough to warrant the direct attention of the Comptroller-General,[39] who, in answering the letters of Perier of March 18 and April 1, 1730, wrote: "As for the various tribes that are near us, I see that some are stronger than others, such are, for instance, the Choctaws and the Chickasaws, and that the latter have been the authors of the conspiracy which was carried out by the Natchez and the Yazoos, *but as you give no proof of the general conspiracy which you claim had been entered upon by all the nations*[40] at the solicitation of the English,[41] I can hardly persuade myself that there is any truth in the reproaches which you were told the Natchez hurled at the Choctaws.[42] I believe on the contrary, that if there had been any ground [for such reproaches], the Choctaws would not have, as they did, marched with the French against the Natchez at the first word of LeSueur.[43]

In Louisiana, public opinion put the blame on the Commandant of the Natchez Post. His tyranny and his exactions goaded the Natchez to fury. This Dechepare[44] was a creature of Perier. He ought to have been removed from his office, but "thanks to his intrigues and the support given him, he was kept in his post."[45] His misconduct,[46] and above all his attempt to seize the land of the Natchez and to drive the Indians out of their village precipitated the crisis. But the Commandant, though reviled by everybody, was following instructions. In an unsigned memoir,

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[39] For the position of this official, cf. E. Lavisse, *Histoire Générale*, VI, 166; Montagne, *op. cit.*, 68.

[40] "The Natchez alone, numbering 5 or 600 warriors made the coup, although it is asserted that there was a general conspiracy of all the Indians to kill the French." *BN.*, Mss. fr., n. a., 2551:23. Cf. AC., C 13A, 16:223 v. (*MPA.*, III, 557) — Perier was very much offended at the incredulity of the Comptroller-General. He wrote to the Minister "I know that people have looked upon the general conspiracy of all the Indians to murder the French as a trumped-up tale, (un compte (*sic*) fait a plaisir) yet, my Lord, nothing is truer." AC., C 13A, 13:58v. (Italics in text ours).

[41] On the share of the English, cf. Adair, *The History of the American Indians...*, London, 1775, 353-354, but as Swanton remarks (*Indian Tribes of the Lower Mississippi Valley...*, p. 223), Adair speaks of 1730, not of 1729.

[42] Perier's *Relation*, AC., C 13A, 12:45; *Jes. Rel.*, 68:190.

[43] Draft of the Comptroller-General to Perier, AC., C 13A, 12:239; for the attitude of the Choctaws, cf. AC., C 13A, 12:116, (*MPA.*, I, 81 ss.)

[44] The name is spelled: de Chepart, Dechepare, Deschepart, De Chopart, cf. *MPA.*, I, 57, note 1; de Villiers, *Journal de la Société des Américanistes de Paris*, XVI, n. s., (1924), p. 145, gives as the true form of the name D'Etchepare. However, there is in the Archives of the Superior Council, Cabildo, New Orleans, a petition for assignation dated May 25, 1725, bearing the autograph signature of the Commandant: DEchepare.

[45] Montagne, *op. cit.*, 114; cf. Le Page du Pratz, *op. cit.*, III, 231.

[46] AC, C 13A, 5:217; C 13C, 4:35; de Champigny, *Etat présent de la Louisiane...*, La Haye, 1776, 19.

dated January, 1731, we read: "Moreover, it is secretly maintained, that the cause of the Natchez massacre should not be imputed to the late Chepart alone . . . and that he was following written orders which some people are said to have read."[47] Elsewhere the accusation is more clearly formulated: "The reason which led the Natchez to perpetrate such a deed, is that M. Perier having the intention of beginning a plantation in their country in partnership with Dechepare . . . had asked him to drive out the Natchez . . . in order to take the land occupied by the Indians for their plantations."[48] Le Page du Pratz says that Dechepare had hoodwinked Perier into allowing his return to Natchez after he had been called to New Orleans to answer the deluge of complaints caused by his exactions;[49] and Father Le Petit softens the guilt of Dechepare still more,[50] probably because he saw that by accusing the officer, the blame would rebound on Perier. The Governor himself inveighs against the Commandant not because of his exactions, but because when forewarned of the impending revolt, Dechepare refused to listen to the warning and did not take the necessary measures to prevent it.[51]

There were now discordant notes in the concert of praise that had hailed Perier at the time of his arrival in Louisiana. The Governor had deteriorated, if he ever deserved the loud encomiums written about him when he took office at New Orleans.[52] Without accepting fully the conclusion of Oudard,[53] one must agree with Schlarman[54] with regard to Perier's Indian policy. He wanted to rule the colony as he would have ruled marines on a man-of-war,[55] and he had become too much interested in developing his plantation across the River to the detriment of the general affairs of the Colony. "I fear," wrote the Comptroller-General, "that the plantation you were bent on developing as soon as you arrived in Louisiana, has taken so much of your time that it has prevented you from watching more closely over things

[47] Archives du Service Hydrographique, (*ASH*) 67, n. 16. This same grave accusation is found in d'Ausseville's memoir on Louisiana, 1732, Jan. 20, AC, C 13A, 14:230. We must add, however, that Councillor d'Ausseville was a bitter enemy of Perier. The Governor was doing all he could to prevent d'Ausseville from succeeding de la Chaise as ordonnateur. Cf. AC., C 13A, 12:254 v., and C 13A, 17:5 v.

[48] *BN.*, Mss. fr., n. a., 2551:23; cf. A. Baillardel et A. Prioult, *Le Chevalier de Pradel, Vie d'un colon français au XVIIIe siècle*, Paris, 1928, p. 61.

[49] *Op. cit.*, III, 231; *Journal de la Société des Américanistes de Paris*, XVI, n. s. (1924), 145.

[50] *Jes. Rel.*, 68:164; but cf. Father Vivier's letter, *Jes. Rel.*, 69:214.

[51] AC., C 13A, 12:38.

[52] AC, C 13A, 10:311, 321, 340; C 13C, 1:376 v.; *Jes. Rel.*, 67:268, 276, etc.

[53] *Four Cents an Acre*, New York, 1931, p. 182.

[54] *From Quebec to New Orleans*, Belleville, Ill., 1929, p. 244.

[55] AC., C 13A, 15:175 v.; C 13A, 17:5 v.

infinitely more important. Your private business should not, however, make you neglect public affairs."[56] In the letters and reports to the French Government voicing the discontent of the colonists with the Governor,[57] there were undoubtedly exaggerations and downright falsehoods. The habit of writing damaging letters with no other foundation than the jealousy of political and personal enemies was only too common in Louisiana during the French Period to accept on their face value all these accusations. But it is well-nigh impossible to excuse Perier's Indian policy. In this he was a complete failure.

His first letter to the Abbé Raguet, the ecclesiastic on the Board of Directors of the Company of the the Indies, has the following post-script: "The Indians, so difficult to manage, according to what people have said, have shown great satisfaction at my arrival. They have all come to sing the calumet for me. Several have told me in their harangues that M. de Bienville had deceived them, that they were glad he had not returned."[58] Perier's conceit was boundless. It was his self-confidence, fanned by the interested hyperbolic praise of his abilities by those around him, that prompted him to compare himself to his own advantage with Bienville, who in spite of his many shortcomings, knew from long experience better than anybody in the Mississippi Valley how to deal with the Indians.

Even the Natchez massacre did not teach the Governor caution. He is still proud of his knowledge of the Indian character,[59] and later he attempted to defend a new war he had launched gainst the powerful Chickasaws,[60] although everyone in the colony was against it.[61] He engaged in a long controversy with Diron d'Artaguette, the Commandant of Mobile, about the policy to be adopted with the Choctaws, and called the chiefs of this tribe to New Orleans. This was strongly reproved by the Comptroller-General for having thus shown the Indians "your weak point in having them come to the capital city of the colony, which is yet but a growing town, without fortifications, open on all sides.

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[56] AC., C 13A, 12:351. After Perier's recall this plantation was sold, and as late as 1742, (AC., C 13A, 27:124), the official correspondence contains references to the difficulties his agent in Louisiana had in collecting the money from the buyers.

[57] AC., C 13A, 15:24.

[58] AC., C 13A, 10:212 v., in *MPA.*, I, 541 ss.

[59] AC., C 13A, 12:43 v. Cf. AC., C 13A, 13:58 v. "As for the Indians, I think I know them better than those who were here before me."

[60] AC., C 13A, 16:204 v.

[61] AC., C 13A, 14:129 v., Gayarré, *op. cit.*, I, 283.

You have shown them unprotected plantations scattered along the River."[62]

Nor did Perier rise in the estimation of the French Government by the manner in which the two punitive expeditions against the Natchez were conducted. The Natchez, with few casualties, escaped during the night of February 26, 1730. This first expedition was commanded by de Loubois who delayed at the Tunicas until January 27—two months after the massacre—and who only resolved to go up the River when he heard of Lesueur's vigorous attack on the Natchez.[63] The Indians went to the Washita River.[64] French reenforcements having arrived in the course of the year, Perier, this time, headed the expedition, with his brother as second in command.[65] On January 29, 1731, owing to to the incapacity of the Governor,[66] the Natchez again escaped.[67] About 450 prisoners were taken, mostly women and children, the majority of the men having fled during the night.[68] Perier began by saying that twenty Natchez had managed to escape,[69] then he increased the number to one hundred,[70] "but M. Salmon in his private[71] letter of January 18, notifies us that he had learned from people living in the Illinois country (dans les pays d'en haut) that the Natchez still number from 250 to 300,[72] and that having taken refuge among the Chickasaws, they could still seriously imperial the safety of the colony. All the other dispatches re-

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[62] AC., C 13A, 12:340.

[63] AC., C 13A, 12:372; Gayarré, *op. cit.*, I. 269.

[64] *LHQ.*, VI, (1923), 553; *Jes. Rel.*, 68:218, 380, note 31.

[65] AC., B 43:909.

[66] *ASH.*, 67, n. 16.

[67] A tragi-comedy took place after the second escape of the Natchez. When the news was brought to Perier that the Indians had escaped, he refused to believe it. He sent Baron de Cresnay to storm the fort. An officer meeting the charging battalion told the Baron to go at it unhesitatingly, that there were no more Natchez but only French soldiers in the fort. Near the fort, de Cresnay gave orders to pelt it with grenades, and only rescinded the order when de Benac, the French officer who had entered the fort, threatened to shoot him, if grenades were thrown among his soldiers, "which," says the chronicler, "put a stop to this new kind of war." *BN.*, Mss. fr., n. a., 2551:113.

[68] *ASH.*, 67, n. 16: 380 women and children, 19 negroes and 46 men. In a letter of an inhabitant of New Orleans, it is said that 450 prisoners arrived in the city, but that more than 400 were women and children. *BN.*, Mss. fr., n. a., 2610:63-64 bis. Beauchamp, writing from Mobile says: "Only women and children were made prisoners and 45 men." AC., C 13A, 13:197. Most of them were shipped to S. Domingo there to be sold as slaves. *BN.*, Mss., fr., n. a., 2551:113; 2610:63 v.

[69] AC., C 13A, 13:37, 16 men and 4 women.

[70] Perier had written to de Maurepas that 28 Natchez were in the neighborhood of Pointe Coupée, and that 72 had settled among the Chickasaws, (AC., C 13A, 14:70 v.). If the Minister of the Navy wanted precise information, he had all reasons to be satisfied when he saw these numbers, but cf., the answer of de Maurepas, AC., B 57:861 v.

[71] The Minister is making a distinction between Salmon's private letter, dated January 18, 1732, (AC., C 13A, 15:24-26 v.), and the letter signed by Perier and Salmon, December 5, 1731, (AC., C 13A, 13:8-24 v.).

[72] *ASH.*, 67, n. 16 has 100 men, 60 women, plus 40 warriors who were hunting at the time of the siege, and 20 negroes.

ceived from the colony agree with what M. Salmon writes."[73] The "destroyed" Natchez continued to roam along the banks of the Mississippi until 1740,[74] when they finally settled among the Chickasaws and the Cherokees.

What has thus far been said is sufficient proof of the Governor's failure to deal successfully with the Indians in Louisiana. His order to massacre the Chaouachas,[75] an inoffensive tribe near New Orleans, argues cruelty, pure and simple. How could a handful of Indians—they numbered 30 warriors[76]—terrorize the town?[77] It is hard to understand how this inexcusable massacre can be looked upon as a heroic deed and how one can consider it an example of Perier's energy.[78] The fierce way with which the Governor relates this exploit does not palliate his action, and if he thought he was magnanimous in *not* destroying the other little tribes along the Mississippi, such was not the view of the French Government. The Comptroller-General was horrified on reading this: "I absolutely cannot approve of your having ordered, on a slight suspicion, the destruction of the Chaouachas, a tribe numbering only 30 warriors. I even see with unbounded surprise your proposal to destroy the other small nations along the River from New Orleans to the sea, to free for us, so you say, the banks of the Mississippi.[79] I absolutely cannot give my consent to such a proposal, for it is acting against all the rules of good government and against those of humanity. What do you expect the natives will think when they witness the destruction of whole nations who have given you no offense? What confidence will they have in you? Is it not equivalent to forcing them to look upon the French as barbarians who must be driven out or

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[73] AC., C 13A, 14:153. Extracts from the letters of Perier and Salmon with marginal annotations from the Minister. Those dispatches are found in AC., C 13A, 13:143 v., 157, 197; C 13A, 14:129 v.; C 13A, 15:46; C 13A, 16:62 v.

[74] AC., C 13A, 28:35 v. and 53.

[75] Cf. the account in *BN.*, Mss. fr., n. a., 2551:25. Most of the men were out hunting when Tixerant, at the head of 80 negroes, destroyed the village killing the few men that were there and taking the women and children prisoners to New Orleans. When the Indians returned from their hunt, they came to New Orleans and asked the reason why they should have been so ill-treated. "M. Perier had none to give them"; he sent the Chaouachas back to their village with their women and children.

[76] Perier's *Relation*, AC., C 13A, 12:39 v. Father Raphael, in 1726, gives the census of the Chaouachas and Colas combined as "at the most 120 families," AC., C 13A, 10:44, (*MPA.*, II, 515 ss). In 1729 the whole Chaouacha tribe numbered 15 huts. *BN.*, Mss. fr., n. a., 2551:25.

[77] Perier's *Relation*, AC., C 13A, 12:40.

[78] de Rochemonteix, *op. cit.*, I, 357.

[79] This inhuman proposal of Perier is found in a ciphered letter dated August 1, 1730, AC., C 13A, 12:353 v.

massacred?"[80] Let Perier punish the guilty ones, "but that you should put to death innocent people, or at least people whose crime is not certain, I again repeat it, I absolutely cannot approve of it.[81] Nor can the burning of the Natchez woman in New Orleans, in March, 1730, be approved of.[82] The narrator says: "This scene is rather new on this continent, there is no example that a woman has ever been burned at the stake." The Indians tomahawked or sold as slaves captive women or children they did not want for themselves.

It is not surprising that when Louisiana was retroceded to the King, the first care of the French Government was to have Perier recalled and replaced by Bienville.

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[80] Belletrus, in his memoir on Louisiana written toward 1749, speaking of the massacre of the Chaouachas, adds: "Our conduct in this occasion can only have given the Indians in general a very bad impression." BN., *Joly de Fleury*, 1726:11.

[81] AC., C 13A, 12:342 v.

[82] *BN.*, Mss. fr., n. a., 2551:53; cf. Jes. Rel. 68:196.