Paine plans to write on the revolution

After writing his letter to Burke, Paine stayed on in Paris, watching with approval the progress of the revolution. He now planned to take and active part in it himself, by some publication which, he hoped, would have an influence comparable to that of *Common Sense* in the American revolution. He was in close contact with Lafayette, who seems to have supplied him with materials for an account of the events of 1789. In January 1790 Lafayette wrote to Washington: "Common Sense is writing for you a brochure in which you will see a portion of my adventures. The result will be, I hope, happy for my country and for humanity." This brochure was never published, but there can be little doubt that the material for it was incorporated in *Rights of Man*, Part I, which was, in fact, dedicated to George Washington.

Further evidence of Paine's desire to take part in revolutionary events is to be found in his letter to William Short in which he mentions a paper on French affairs which he had written and which he wished to have translated into French, and published in Paris as the work of a Frenchman. Paine evidently wished to have a personal influence on the course of the revolution. In later years he did, indeed, regard himself as one of those responsible for it: "Of all those who began that Revolution," he wrote in 1802, "I am almost the only survivor." The claim was unfounded; Paine had nothing to do with the beginning of the revolution, apart from his acquaintance with such men as

1 See above, p. 103.
3 Ibid., 133. Short was the American chargé d'affaires in Paris.
4 To the Citizens of the United States, Letter I (1802), Foner, *Complete Writings*, II, 909.
Lafayette, Condorcet and Chastellux. Certainly he did his best to improve that acquaintance: for example, by his repeated letters to Lafayette during the summer of 1790. Lafayette however did not reply.

Either because of the coolness of his Paris friends or for some other reason, the paper on French affairs, like the brochure dedicated to Washington, was never published. Perhaps Paine was waiting for a suitable opportunity. He needed some occasion or pretext which would give him a starting-point, and also act as a stimulus. Burke's book would admirably fulfil these functions. Paine was still in Paris when, some weeks after writing to Burke, he heard of the latter's speech against the revolution, and of his intention to publish a public letter explaining and justifying his opinions. Paine let it be known to his friends, and to Burke himself, that he would reply to such a publication.

Paine returned to London in April 1790, and the morning after his arrival hastened to the publisher and bookseller Debrett, for the news of Burke's expected publication. He was told that Burke was still at work on it, revising and correcting so much that there were rumours he would never publish at all. In fact, Reflections did not appear until November. In the meantime Paine met Burke a number of times, apparently on friendly terms. There was, however, an explicit understanding between them that they should not discuss French affairs. "This agreement is very fair," wrote Paine, "because he knows that I intend to reply to his Book." 

Paine fails to understand Burke

At last the Book appeared, and Paine immediately set to work. He was now addressing the English public for the first time since the failure of his Prospects of the Rubicon in 1787; and the fact that he could now publish his opinions in the form of a reply to Burke certainly gained for them more publicity than they would otherwise have enjoyed. In his "Preface to the English Edition" Paine took care to stress his acquaintance with Burke, and thus contrived to place himself on the

1 For an account of Paine's friends and activities in Paris, see ALDRIDGE, "Condorcet et Paine, leurs rapports intellectuels."
2 ALDRIDGE, Man of Reason, 132.
3 See above, p. 5.
4 ALDRIDGE, Man of Reason, 130.
5 Ibid., 130, 132; Rights of Man (Ev.), 143; The Writings, II, 394.
6 Paine to [Unknown], 16 April 1790, FONER, Complete Writings, II, 1300.
7 ALDRIDGE, Man of Reason, 132.