

upon his return to England. Franklin also gave Wyld a passport to go to Ostend in the Low Countries on January 5, 1782, and apparently promised to issue passports to the entire group. Disappointed by Franklin's refusal to lay out any cash beyond the small personal loan to cover travel expenses, Wyld asked him to inform the Pennsylvania legislature of the group's pending arrival and arrange for a subsidy to cover transportation and initial operating costs. Again, he clearly stated that they expected an inventor's monopoly of pirated technology: "give us an only Right in such Machinery as we may introduce."<sup>50</sup>

Franklin's encouragement of the Stockport immigrants was short-lived. A delay in the repayment of the ten guineas soured his feelings for the group. He ignored their letters and used a technicality to refuse their requests for individual passports. The Stockport leaders nevertheless kept him abreast of their project and of their anticipation of great rewards from the introduction of pirated technology to North America. Edmund Clegg informed Franklin that they were "amply provided with kinds of Models for the perfecting of our Purpose." A silk specialist, Clegg inquired what silk machinery was available in the United States, explaining that while he would try to bring some over from England, "the laws make it very dangerous to attempt such a thing." Wyld, sounding somewhat bitter over Franklin's sudden change of heart, wrote that "in any Country where manufactures are wanted, we should meet with more indulgences than we wished to ask for, [than] from the States you so honorably represent." In spite of the "distress and confusion" caused by the American diplomat's coolness toward the group, Wyld reported that he had assembled "some of the ablest Artists in the Country, who . . . earnestly desire, to be the first persons who may arrive there in the Capacity of Manufacturers in our Branches."<sup>51</sup>

Franklin finally yielded and issued a passport for the group as a whole with a general recommendation to the Pennsylvania legislature to assist them. Responding to the specific questions about silk

machinery, Franklin suggested that Clegg ignore the prohibitions and bring some machinery over with him upon his migration. Finally, the group departed from Liverpool to Londonderry in the summer of 1782. British authorities, however, were forewarned, and the emigrants were arrested. After a short stay in an Irish jail they were released and enlisted to help industrialize Ireland.<sup>52</sup>

The American representative to the court of Louis XVI had neither the funds nor the authority to promise state subsidies for technology transfer and consequently, save for the symbolic small loan to Wyld, he gave no material support to the Stockport group. Yet, Franklin encouraged the group to defy Britain's restrictions on the emigration of artisans and their machines. He promised safe passage to America and was willing to put the group in touch with men of means in Pennsylvania who could help them get things started. He advised that they leave for Ulster and from there go to America, an advice they followed. All the while, British authorities believed that Franklin was heavily involved in the Stockport scheme of industrial espionage. The letters in Wyld's possession and the passport signed by Franklin were the evidence used by John Swindell, an engineer who infiltrated the group to learn of its intentions, to conclude that Franklin "promised to establish them, as the united Company, supported by Congress."<sup>53</sup>

During the war technology diffusion took a back seat to the pressing issues of forming international alliances and negotiating peace with Great Britain. With independence secured, the dependence of the young republic on imported manufactured goods, and the seemingly mad rush of Americans to purchase English products, underscored the importance of developing an independent economy. One of the central issues of the 1780s was, after all, British monopoly of American trade. The shortage of industrial know-how in the United States meant that industrial development depended on the importation of technology from Europe. The widespread